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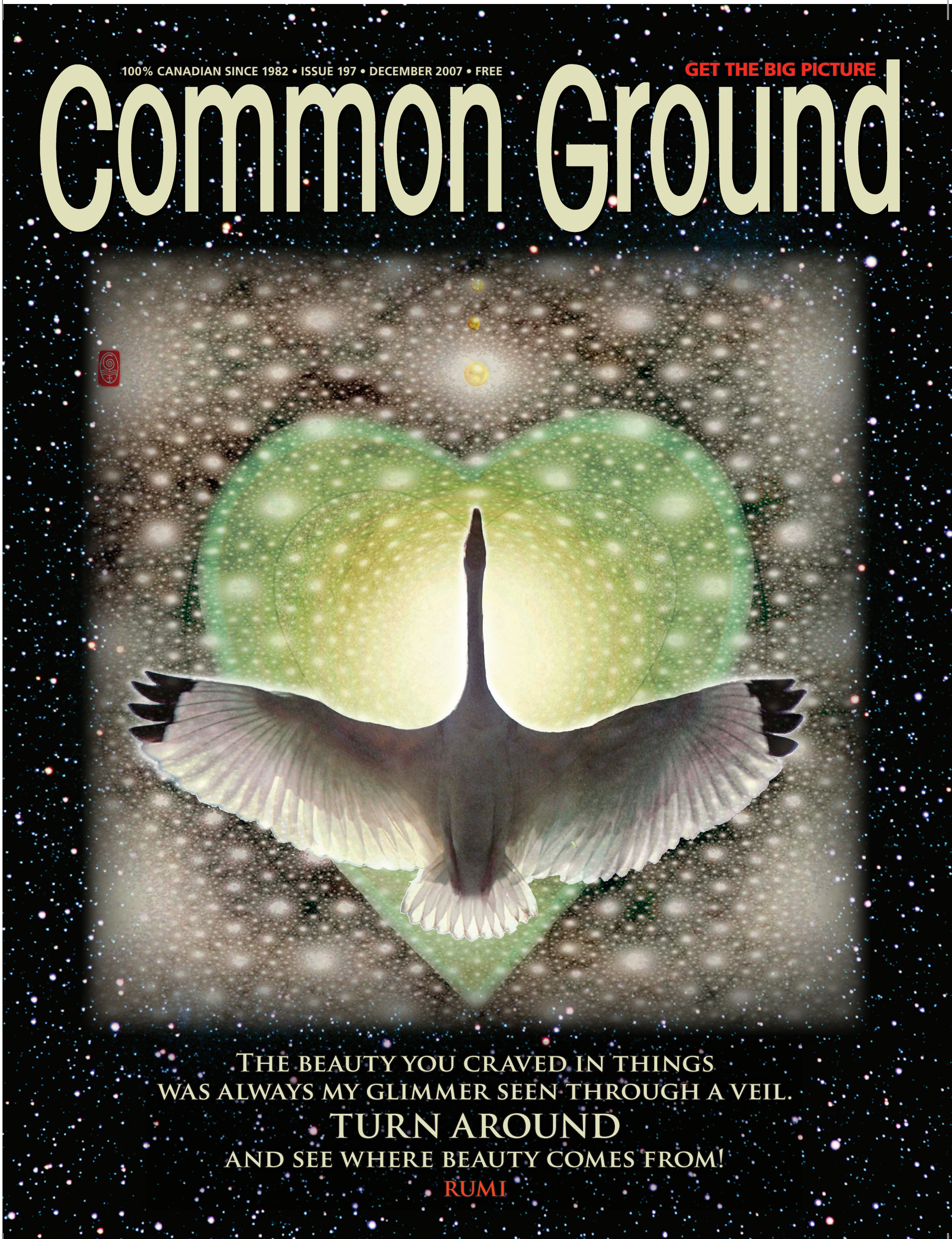

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RUMI

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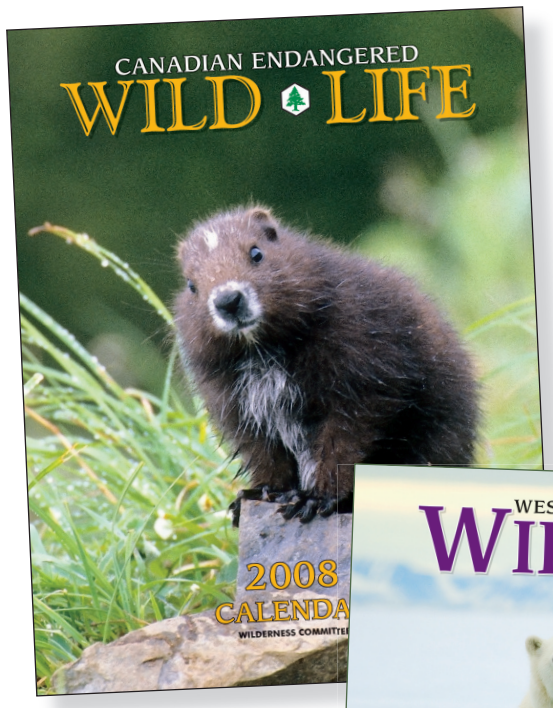

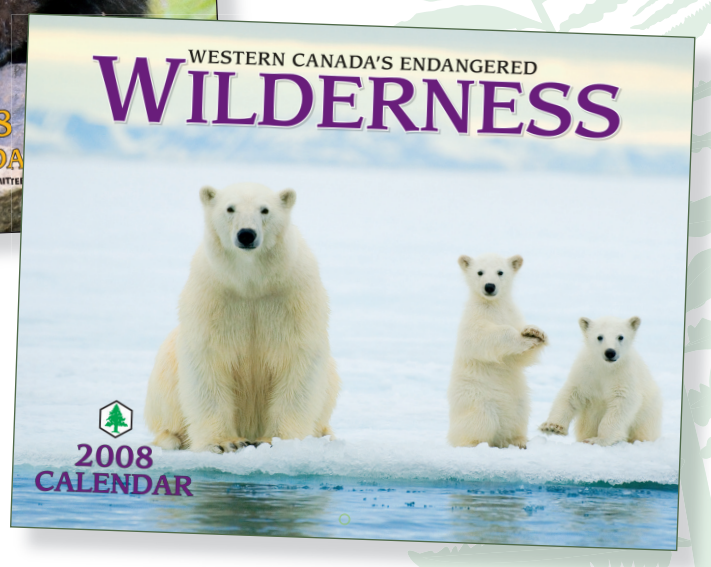

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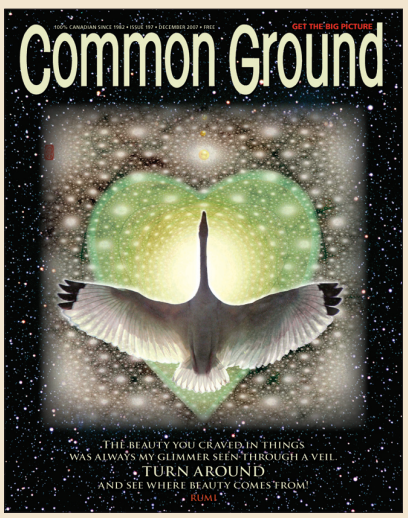
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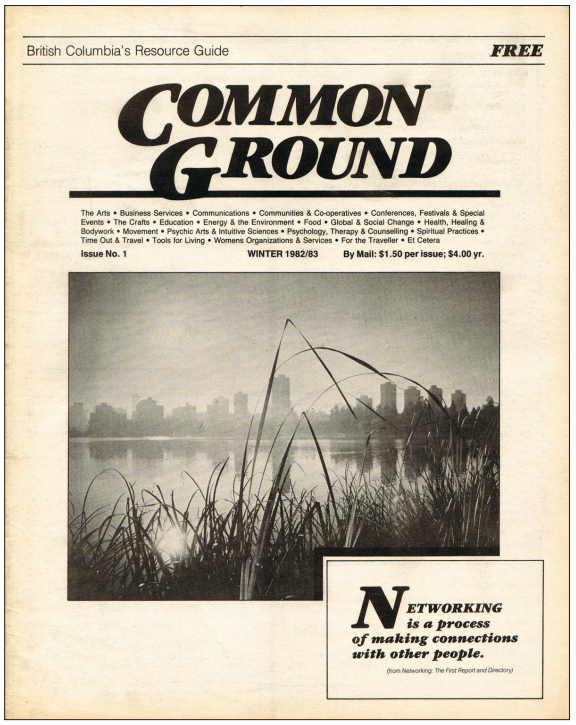
British Columbia's Resource Guide — FREE

COMMON GROUND

The Arts • Business Services • Communications • Communities & Co-operatives • Conferences, Festivals & Special Events • The Crafts • Education • Energy & the Environment • Food • Global & Social Change • Health, Healing & Bodywork • Movement • Psychic Arts & Intuitive Sciences • Psychology, Therapy & Counselling • Spiritual Practices • Time Out & Travel • Tools for Living • Womens Organizations & Services • For the Traveller • Et Cetera

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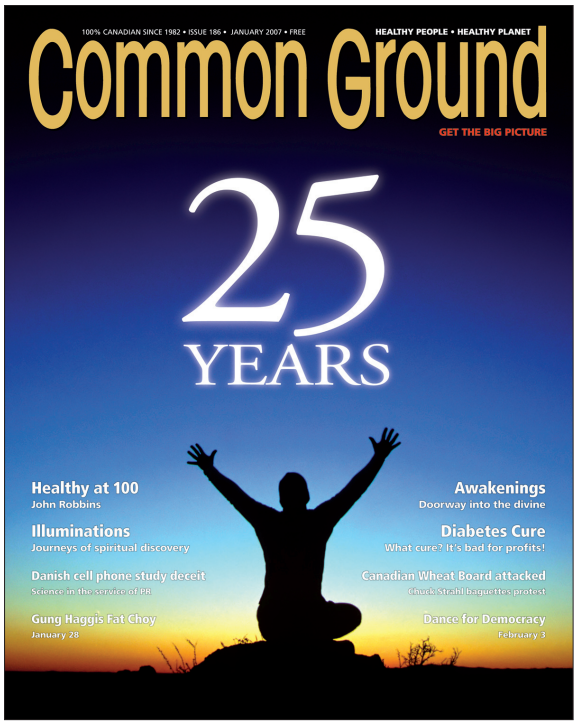
NETWORKING is a process of making connections with other people.
(from Networking: The First Report and Directory)



FEATURES

Publisher's message 5

A conversation with Michael Green 6
Debra Hiers

Beware those black box prescriptions 10
Alan Cassels

Alternative medicine pioneers receive inaugural Dr. Rogers Prize 15

A scrooge for the ages 16
Geoff Olson

25 December Common Ground covers 24

IN EVERY ISSUE

CULTURE

Dam it all! 22
FILMS WORTH WATCHING Robert Alstead

All at once 23
TWENTY SOMETHING Ishi Dinim

ENVIRONMENT

Prevent cancer now 20
EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

The bugs in free trade 21
SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki

HEALTH

Healthy celebrations 9
NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina

ORGANICS

Christmas naturally 14
ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

SPIRITUALITY

Longing for wholeness 18
POWER OF NOW Eckhart Tolle

The path to bliss 19
UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

RESOURCE DIRECTORY 25
DATEBOOK 32
CLASSIFIED 33
ON TRACK ZODIAC 34

TLC The Land Conservancy BRITISH COLUMBIA'S "NATIONAL TRUST"
Canada
CHFA Canadian Health Food Association — Voice of the Natural Products Industry
H.A.N.S.
Choix environnemental — Environmental Choice
ethics in action awards

healing happens happiness is

Thank you for making *Common Ground* a part of your life. For the past 25 years, it has been an incredible privilege to host this independent publication and website dedicated to inspiration and the discovery of what's really going on locally and globally.

I invite you to think of 2008 as the turn-around year when we turn our attention to a higher level of thinking. How about asking the source of all creation the question, "What is our purpose here?" and learn how to move into action to steer our lives and precious planet towards life enhancing solutions.

As Albert Einstein said, the level of thinking that created the problems we face is not the level of thinking needed to find the solutions.

I invite you to email your great ideas or great moves for making our city, our province and our world a better place (editor@commonground.ca). We welcome all of your ideas, from the physical to the spiritual, from the mundane to the majestic.

The mainstream mantra "if it bleeds, it leads" is the old fear-based matrix media trying to convince us that the world is a terrifying place. But that is just one perspective; there are many others. It is time to turn our attention away from that constant bombardment of messages of terror or violence and redirect our focus to what is healthy, happy and holistic.

We at *CG* believe that a higher level of thinking touches the heart and minds of the majority of human beings, rather than just a select few. We have a beautiful world that needs protecting. Each one of us is precious and needs love, nourishment, respect and shelter. If we are going to heal the problems of the world, we must take a bit of time to heal ourselves as well.

Common Ground looks forward to hearing your wonderful ideas. In celebration of our 26th year, in our next issue we will publish 26 great moves to make our world more wonderful. We have met the solution and the solution is us. You are the solution. You are the change we want to see in this world. Here's to a healthier, happier more humane next 25 years.

Joseph Roberts, founder & publisher
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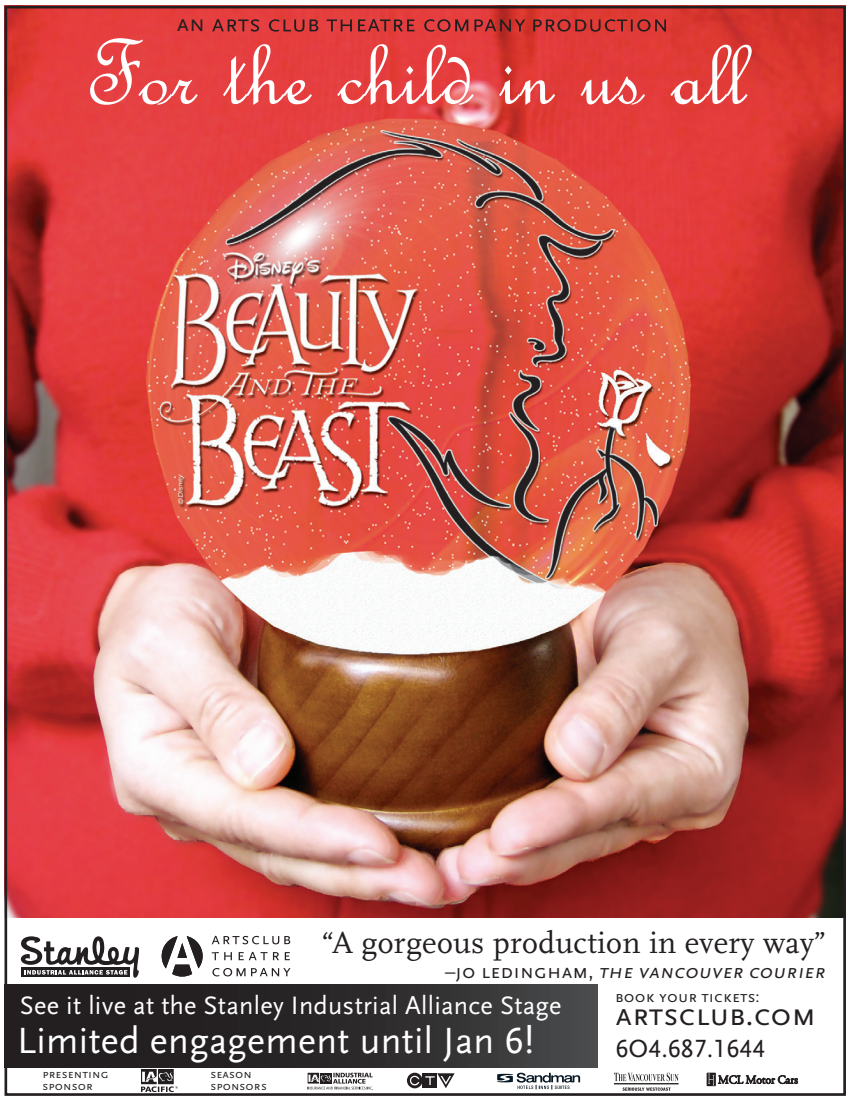

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Illuminating Rumi

A conversation with Michael Green

by Debra Hiers

Michael Green has an extraordinary appetite for engaging the divine as he goes about making art in the tradition of the nameless shamanic artisan. He is the creator of The Illuminated Rumi *with Coleman Barks and* One Song: A New Illuminated Rumi. *He is a student of the venerable Sufi master Bawa Muhaiyadeen and lives in Pennsylvania's Brandywine Valley with wife Saliha and son Kabir.*

Debra Hiers: You've created these amazing visual recordings of Rumi. How did you come to know Rumi?

Michael Green: I came to know Rumi through Coleman. I'm an English major who never developed a taste for poetry and its artful speculations and observations. Then Coleman gave me one of his Rumi books one day, and, well, well, here's an enlightened being writing poetry. And he just nails it. There's such deliciousness about the way that Coleman's Rumi wraps up the big stuff in so few words. As an artist, I thought it would be grand to do a book together, something in the ancient tradition of illuminated manuscripts. When word and picture combine, you have a left brain/right brain communication package and it slows you down. Important things need to be absorbed slowly and through different channels.

DH: How did you go about creating *The Illuminated Rumi*? Does the poem inspire the artwork or does the artwork find the poem?

MG: I generally start with a poem. I am a great advocate of what you might call the Michelangelo school of art. He was once complimented for being a great sculptor and he dismissed it. "I'm not a sculptor," he said. "Sometimes I'm shown a block of stone and I see figures imprisoned inside. All I do is remove what doesn't belong." I love that. When I do something worthy, I always feel like I've discovered it. I'm just as delighted as anybody else.

DH: You find that to be true even in the process of creating digital art?

MG: All books and a lot of art are created digitally these days and while, in general, I am uneasy about the digital world, it's interesting how this technology makes some things go so easily. Photoshop is a very fluid tool that can move things around and do a lot of "what ifs?" so it's a huge aid to the process of fishing around… and ultimately pulling down images that are out there waiting to be found.

Digital technology also lets me bring together different great traditions and introduce them to each other. I could *draw* a Persian peacock, but if I can just lift one out of an old, Persian book, it has the mojo, the actual *touch* of the original artist. Then, if it wants to be behind a Tibetan Buddha, the result can be richer than either alone. It can be a real marriage. It becomes part of an extraordinary process that's going on now; we're the first culture in history that is able to draw for inspiration upon everything the human race has ever known or done. Our vocabulary includes Aborigine rock painting and Hubble deep space photos, and I think this cross-culture pollination is where the real juice is nowadays.

DH: Rumi is a perfect example of that. Here it is 800 years later and a medieval Muslim is celebrated as the most popular poet in America. Why do you think Rumi is so popular?

MG: There are two reasons. The obvious reason is Coleman. Somehow his good 'ol boy soft Southern voice is just absolutely the right match for Rumi even though it is so different from the original Farsi. Coleman reaches deep into it and he pulls up the essence and presents it in a new language. And he gives us the parts he finds the most compelling, the notion of the infinite Great Mystery as lover, as friend, and the notion, which I made the title of my new *Illuminated Rumi* book, that "… all these religions, all this singing, it is just one song."

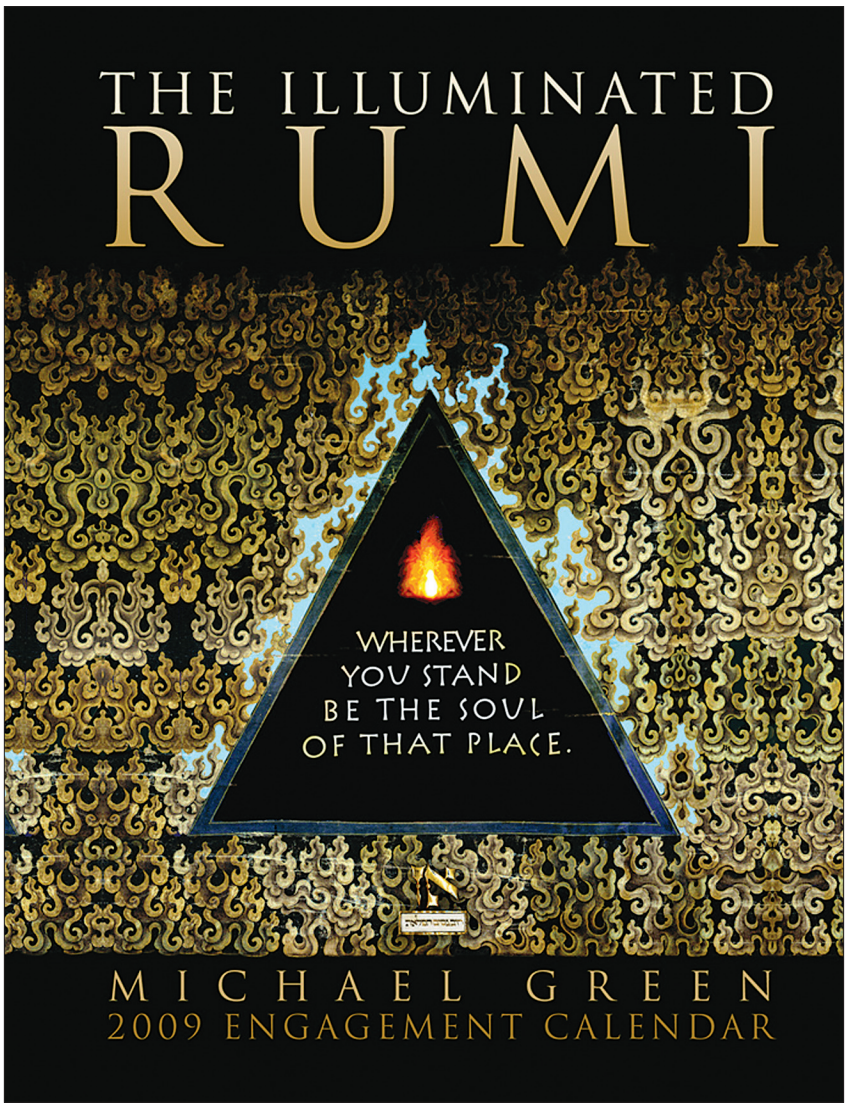
People think Rumi is some sort of a free-floating mystic, but he's not. He was a card-carrying Muslim who just kept slipping outside of all definitions and boundaries. So he is someone who, grounded in one tradition, is speaking from personal experience that all the religions are the same song.

People think Rumi is some sort of a free-floating mystic, but he's not. He was a card-carrying Muslim who just kept slipping outside of all definitions and boundaries. So he is someone who, grounded in one tradition, is speaking from personal experience that all the religions are the same song. Not the same thing, but *part of* the same song. And I believe this, like $E=mc^2$, is one of the *meta* messages for this troubled moment in time. It's almost as if Central Intelligence has planted Rumi and this *One Song* message, like some timed release capsule, to activate now. If we hear it, *if we get it*, we have a chance, and if we don't, we're in very, very deep trouble.

DH: There's a CD of music performed by The Illumination Band that comes with *One Song*. What is the music like and how did that come together?

MG: That music is a particular pleasure of mine. It actually started when my wife Saliha produced a Coleman concert in Philadelphia. We told him we would get some music to go with the reading. I got together with old musician-genius friend David Mowry and we worked up some of the usual noodling that works nicely behind poetry. When we were done, David who has this old, deep gospel-blues thread in his DNA, started doing some strumming and humming, and all of a sudden I heard some kind of Appalachian bluegrass *something*, and I opened one of the Rumi books, at random – and curiously to the very first poem that Rumi recited, the poem about the reed – and I said to David, 'Can you sing this?' He did, and it was like two old rivers joining.

We both felt it: this Appalachian bluegrass, which is one of our homegrown sacred music traditions, caught Rumi perfectly. It's something called transmission – what happens when a formless essence-truth travels across cultures and it takes on different packaging, a different coloration. But if the essence remains then it's an authentic transmission. So we brought in some more musicians, worked up a few songs, and boy did the audience respond. We started getting invitations to play all over.



DH: How did you meet Coleman?

MG: Coleman and I met sitting in front of Bawa Muhaiyadeen, who was a Sufi master, and one of those rare beings who are just totally *gone*. I mean in the way that the Heart Sutra means when it says, '*Gone, gone, gone, gone beyond*.' If you are fortunate enough to glimpse such a one, there is no mistaking it. He was *there*. We had both recognized that.

DH: Can you say more about your time with Bawa and what you learned from him?

MG: When you met Bawa, you didn't feel that you had to buy into a particular trip, like a particular religion. It was as if someone threw open the doors of a room and *oh-my-gosh* they opened onto a great mountain vista. And it didn't belong to anybody. It didn't have any stamp on it. Even though Bawa spoke Tamil and was clearly from another culture, he was incredibly familiar. And there's that same universality with Rumi.

Bawa would say things like, 'There are four gateways to hell: caste, race, class and *religion.'* And what he meant was that anything we create that makes a line in the sand – so that someone can say 'Christians over here, Muslims over there*'* – he was not comfortable with it. He did not like anything that made a division in the human family, in the oneness of how things really are.

Bawa was a light-bringer and a flame holder. And if you wanted to move closer to the flame, anything with name and form was subject to incineration at a moment's notice. When I think about it, being intimate with Bawa was in some way like the feeling that we all had for a few days after 9/11. Underneath all that shock and sorrow was a subtle, mystical element. On this gut level, we felt so clearly how the whole thing could just drop right out from under you. And of course, that which can drop out from under you will drop out from under you. No matter whether it's personal, as in the end of your life, or on a wider stage as in the rise and fall of whole civilizations. So the big question becomes, 'What is that which cannot drop out from under you?' That's the Great Mystery, which we're here to uncover, to turn to, to embrace. As the Buddha said, 'There is a turning around we must do'.

DH: What does the poetry of Rumi teach us about living in this crazy world today?

MG: Well, it's to turn in the right direction. Rumi is constantly, out of any situation at all, trying to get us to turn in the right direction, which is to keep our hearts wide open.

I love the way Rumi uses jokes, off-colour stories, grand sagas, the whole spectrum of human life and how he keeps going right down into the dank cellars of life where the worst stuff is happening. He gets right down with us into our most unconscious ways, groans with us and then, somehow, he finds the stairs, he starts going up and up and all of a sudden he's out on the roof, and then he's lifting off the roof. All his poetry is clearing this channel for us, this passage from unconsciousness to consciousness. Crawling, walking, then spreading great silent wings...

Originally published in Evolve! *magazine (Vol. 6, number 4, fall 2007).* Evolve! *is a publication of New Leaf Distributing Company, www.newleaf-dist.com, www.evolvemagazine.com*

For more information about Michael Green's art: www.michaelgreenarts.com

In celebration of the 800th birth anniversary of Rumi, UNESCO proclaimed 2007 the International Year of Rumi. Rumi was born on September 30, 1207 A.D. in Balkh in the northeastern provinces of Persia, now Afghanistan. He died on December 17, 1273.

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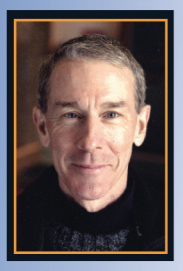
Dr. Reggie Ray Vancouver 2008 Lectures and Workshop



Reginald A. Ray, Ph.D., teaches within the dharma and meditation lineages of the great siddha Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, and brings a special gift for applying Tibetan Buddhism to the problems, inspirations, and spiritual imperatives of modern people. On the faculty of Naropa University since its inception, his latest book is *Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body.* He is also the author of *Indestructible Truth, The Secret of the Vajra World, Buddhists Saints in India, & In the Presence of Masters*

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Friday, January 18, 7:00-9:00pm
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Tibetan Buddhism in the Modern World
Tuesday, January 22, 7:00-9:00pm
Location: Joseph & Rosalie Segal Centre, Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre - 515 West Hastings Street

Amitabha's Heart: Love & Wisdom in Buddhism
Wednesday, January 23 , 7:00-9:00pm
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Weekend Program - ($200 CN for the weekend; $100 CN for students with ID): January 26 & 27, 9:00am-4:00pm

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Healthy celebrations

NUTRISPEAK *Vesanto Melina MS, RD*

We look forward to holiday feasting, but our anticipation may be mixed. Experience has taught us that it takes a *lot* of exercise in the New Year to shed bulges added in December. Some ask how we can feast while following dietary guidelines for heart disease, diabetes or cancer. We might also wonder how to create festive menus for groups that include vegetarians, non-vegetarians and/or people with food sensitivities.

Can foods be celebratory, healthful and still taste great? Yes! Often, the required adjustments to the menu or recipe are slight. Here are some examples:

Our fare might include stuffed squash, lentil or nut roast, tofurky, candied yams, delicious vegetables and cranberry sauce. Traditional foods can be prepared without dairy products, eggs or other animal products. Mashed potatoes can be made with margarine and non-dairy milk (soy milk or rice milk). Glaze carrots with margarine and brown sugar.

Gravy can be cholesterol free and vegan. (Vegetable stock can be purchased readymade or made from powder or cubes.) Roast 1/3 cup whole wheat flour over low heat until it starts to smell nutty; remove from heat. In another pan, sauté ¼ cup chopped onions and 3 sliced mushrooms in 2 tablespoons oil. Add roasted flour; stir or whisk occasionally as it cooks over low heat for 5 minutes. Add 2 cups vegetable stock or water; 1 teaspoon thyme; 2 teaspoon marjoram or rosemary; 2 tablespoons soy sauce, tamari or Bragg; and ½ teaspoon minced lemon peel (optional). Simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, whisking every few minutes as it thickens. Add salt and pepper.

To make stuffing, choose a base such as rice (for those with gluten sensitivities) or breadcrumbs (check the labels to find vegan bread), then be creative. Add whichever ingredients you like from the following list: nuts or seeds, herbs (thyme, rosemary, sage, parsley), salt, pepper, sautéed garlic or onions, chopped celery, cranberries and sliced water chestnuts. Bake your stuffing mix in a well oiled, covered pan at 350 degrees for half an hour. Pies (apple, pumpkin, pecan) or tarts can be made with vegetarian ingredients.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian and co-author of nutrition classics that make excellent gifts: Becoming Vegetarian*;* Becoming Vegan*; the "*Food Allergy Survival Guide*" and* Raising Vegetarian Children. *Vesanto consults from her home office in Langley. www.nutrispeak.com, 604-882-6782.*

HEALTH

Blueberry Mince Tarts

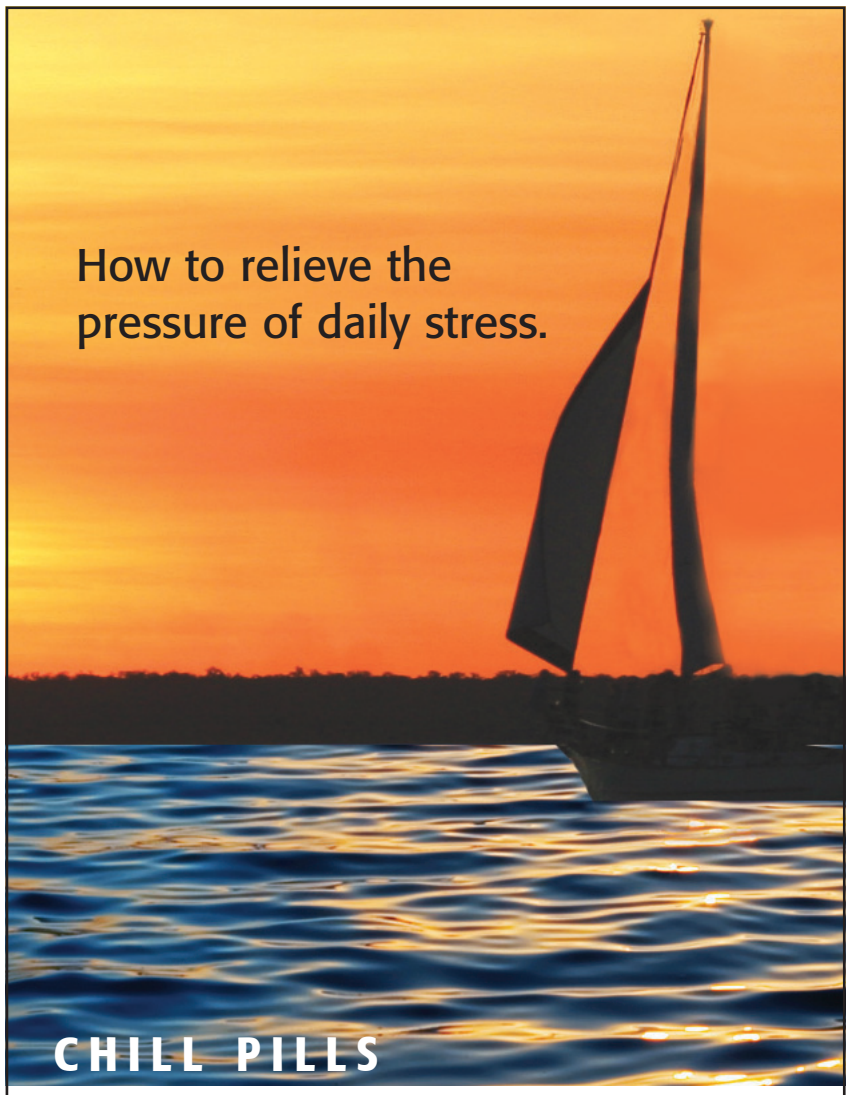
Makes 7 ½ cups filling, 20 large tarts

Two of BC's delicious fruit crops – blueberries and cranberries – are combined in these mouth-watering and refreshingly light tarts. You'll have no flour on the countertop afterwards if you roll the pastry between two clean plastic bags. Cut each bag down two sides and open flat.

Filling:
1-1/4 cups sultana raisins
1-1/4 cups golden raisins
½ cup dried cranberries
½ cup brown sugar
1/3 cup candied mixed peel
2 tbsp fruit juice or brandy
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp grated lemon rind
1 tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp each ground cloves, ginger and nutmeg
4 cups fresh or frozen blueberries

Pastry:
1-1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1-1/2 cups unbleached or all-purpose flour
1 tbsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
½ cup safflower, sunflower, canola or corn oil
½ cup ice water (made with ice cubes in glass of water)

Combine raisins, cranberries, sugar, peel, juices, rind, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and nutmeg in a large bowl. Stir in blueberries and set aside. Preheat oven to 400˚. In a bowl, mix flours, baking powder and salt with a whisk or fork. Stir in oil, tossing mixture with fork until small balls form. Sprinkle ice water gradually into mixture, tossing with fork until all flour is incorporated. Gather dough into 2 balls. Roll out each ball between plastic bags or sheets of waxed paper. To cut out tarts, use a 4-inch diameter jar lid or glass. Lift dough circles with an egg lifter and place in lightly oiled or non-stick muffin tin. Place slightly more than ¼ cup blueberry filling into each tart shell. Leftover filling can be stored in refrigerator or freezer. Bake for 17 to 20 minutes or until crust begins to brown. Cool before removing tarts from tins.



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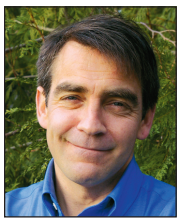

Beware those black box prescriptions

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

It's finally happened. After months of negotiation and enough column inches of press coverage to fill a New York City phone book, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration finally gave in last month and slapped an additional "black box" warning on Avandia (rosiglitazone), a prescription drug used to treat type-2 diabetes.

The new warning adds the risk of heart attacks to the other clouds of concern over this drug. The class action lawsuit announced earlier this year against Avandia's maker, GlaxoSmithKline, alleged that the company had been less than forthright in assessments of the drug's safety. Yet despite the warnings, speculation and controversy over this drug, awkward media attention over the years seems to have done little to slake either our physicians' thirst for prescribing it or patients' eagerness to swallow it.

Since most readers of this column are not likely taking Avandia, let me ask you, dear reader, a question that may never have occurred to you: Do you know if Health Canada has issued any warnings about any drug you are currently taking? Swallowing your daily medication without knowing that it carries an advertised health warning is like living under Red Alert and being deaf to the sirens screaming around you.

In terms of Avandia, the US consumer drug resource worstpills.org has labelled both Avandia and her sister, Actos as "Do Not Use" drugs since 2004. Why? Because it says these drugs are "… only marginally effective at controlling type-2 diabetes and carry with them the possibility of serious side effects." A list of those effects is somewhat disturbing, including heart failure, fractures, vision disturbances, weight gain, fluid retention, liver toxicity and anemia and most recently, heart attacks.

I'm not trying to be overly sensational here, but a huge volume of prescribed drugs are sold every year, despite the clear and present danger warnings they wear. In Avandia's case, the pharmaceutical data company IMS Health Canada estimates that, in 2006, Canadian pharmacies dispensed over 14 million prescriptions for it.

We tend to trust the regulator (Health Canada, US FDA) to keep unsafe drugs off the market and to make considerable effort to warn the prescriber or consumer that there may be safety concerns worth noting. What we don't know, however, is whether the regulators or companies that issue letters to physicians or notifications to the media regarding new safety information are actually reaching the prescriber.

Many aren't, of course. A recent study of the information coming from drug sales representatives' visits to physicians found that important issues about the adverse effects of many popular drugs are not being raised by the sales reps. If anything, the sales reps view their job as requiring the opposite behaviour: to assuage a physician's raised hackles over the perception of a drug's safety in the field, and then to quickly apply the official company-sponsored spin to keep sales buoyant.

We learn about drug safety issues largely through trial and error. Typically, a drug gets launched on to the market described as "well tolerated" and other than a few meek precautions advising against pregnant women and children taking the drug we have little hard information about how it will affect people in the "real world." As prescribing ramps up, the reports of adverse drug reactions start to roll in. Physicians, pharmacists and even patients will report adverse effects by making formal Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) reports to Health Canada. (Report adverse effects at 1-866-234-2345 or visit www.hc-sc.gc.ca and contact the Canadian Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring Program CADRMP.)

Because this is a voluntary system and there are zero incentives for reporting ADRs, it may take a long time for Health Canada to collect a sufficient volume of reports to warrant further investigation. If the reports pile in or another country issues a warning about the drug, Health Canada may ask for additional company data and start to negotiate a label change with the manufacturer. Health Canada doesn't issue drug safety warnings lightly; after months of negotiations with the company, it may order the company to issue a warning letter to health care professionals and otherwise to alert the general public.

Sound like a bizarre system? It is. The worst part is that no one knows if those safety warnings, which are often convoluted and written in the densest technocratic legalese around, reach their intended targets. Sometimes, the drug warning missives are just another camouflaged way for the manufacturer to market its drug, often obscuring the original reason for issuing the warning.

What do we need to know about drug warnings to keep ourselves safe?

Well, first we need to know that any drug that carries a dreaded black box warning is definitely in the "last option" category. A drug with a black box is on life support, about to expire. The warning needs to be read closely and understood that it arrived as a compromise between the regulator and the company. And you should know that it's on its last legs. If you look at the laundry list of drugs that have been removed from the market in the last few years, they almost always wore black boxes of one kind or another before they were removed from the market.

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Probably the easiest way to find out if your drug carries a black box warning is to consult Dr. Google, which should be able to tell you very quickly what kind of warning, if any, your drug may carry.

Sometimes, drug safety warnings are so widely ignored as to seem unbelievable. The worst example that comes readily to mind is a series of warnings related to antipsychotic drugs – drugs developed for schizophrenia – and their use in seniors with dementia. Over the last five years, at least three advisories in Canada were issued related to the serious adverse events of these drugs when taken by patients with dementia. (See sidebar.) Did these drugs change the rate at which physicians prescribe the drugs? Not at all; amazingly, the rates continue to rise and, by all accounts, those drugs continue to be prescribed widely in seniors.

A US study on the quality of antipsychotic prescribing in nursing homes found that of the 693,000 residents, almost 30 percent received antipsychotics between 2001 and 2002 and over 50 percent of these prescriptions were inappropriate. A

recent study in Ontario found that nearly one quarter of seniors who moved to a nursing home in Ontario were put on antipsychotic drugs within a year.

Let me try to summarize what is happening: in addition to other recent stories of abuse and neglect of seniors in long-term care in Canada, let us add one more scandal – the fact that many of those seniors are routinely prescribed drugs with a range of serious and even fatal side effects. Those effects include a higher risk of cardiovascular events such as stroke, transient ischemic attack and sudden death due to heart failure. No doubt some seniors are helped by these drugs, but at what cost to the many exposed to these dangers? One of the most disturbing side effects of the atypicals is the jerky, restless motion of the patients; these involuntary movements of the hands, fingers, arms or legs are common, as is sedation, confusion, restlessness and nervousness.

Is it really possible that no one – not the regulators, the physicians or even the patient advocates – is aware of how widely prescribed these drugs are in this most vulnerable population? Is it true that BC taxpayers through Pharmacare spend over $50 million a year for these three atypical antipsychotic drugs and a good proportion of that spending, which can cost $100 to $1,000 per patient per month, is potentially causing great harm to our seniors?

Both are very good questions.

Despite some of the reassurances your physician might give you, atypical antipsychotics are not approved for treating behaviour disorders in elderly patients with dementia or for dementia-related psychosis. If you or your grandma is taking these drugs, you might want to ask the doctor if he or she has seen the regulator's warnings related to the use of these drugs in the elderly.

But steel yourself; second-guessing your doctor's prescribing is not an easy conversation to get into. But if you need an excuse, blame it on me. Tell your doctor that you have no reason to be concerned, but you read somewhere that drug X has serious side effects and then ask if he can clarify.

Suffice it to say that any drug you are taking besides the two examples of Avandia or atypical antipsychotics described here could carry serious warnings. You might make some effort to find out if any drug your doctor has ordered comes with any black box warnings. If it does, you need to start exploring safer options.

Until Health Canada proves that these warnings are understandable and widely disseminated to and understood by our physicians and the general public, patients need to take their own precautions to prevent any risks.

Many drugs have a dark side, but we need not fear the dark side that we don't know about. We should be more concerned about what we do know.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria who is hoping someday to get a big grant from a philanthropist so that he can start up the "Institute of Cost-Effective Prescribing" and work to make everyone's prescription drug-taking behaviour more rational and life-saving drugs more accessible. www.alancassels.com

Black box warnings

The following is a timeline of warnings for the newer, "atypical" antipsychotics: olanzapine (Zyprexa), risperidone (Risperdal) and quetiapine (Seroquel):
October 11, 2002: Janssen-Ortho Inc., maker of risperidone, issues a letter to health professionals with a black box warning of cerebrovascular adverse events (CVAEs) with use of risperidone in elderly patients with dementia.
March 10, 2004: Eli Lilly, maker of olanzapine, issued a letter to health professionals with a black box warning of the danger of CVAEs associated with use of olanzapine among elderly dementia patients.
June 22, 2005: Health Canada advises health care professionals of the increased risk of death associated with atypical antipsychotics and that these medications are not approved for use in elderly patients with dementia. Risperidone is the only atypical antipsychotic approved for patients with severe dementia.

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- **Fatigue**
- **Decreased Libido**
- **Weight gain (abdomen, hips, thighs)**

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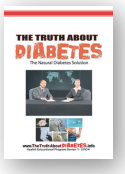

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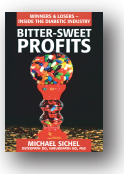

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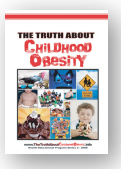

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ON THE GARDEN PATH *Carolyn Herriot*

Greenery for the festive season

This year, make your own seasonal decorations using greenery from nature. You can make festive wall swags, table settings, wreaths or arrangements in vases, using an abundance of available natural materials. Have fun being creative and don't forget the ribbon!

Festive greenery

- Salal (pretty pink berries, glossy green foliage)
- Swordferns (dramatic foliage, colourful spores)
- Mahonia (dark green, handsome foliage)
- *Sarcococca* sweet box (dark green, glossy foliage, black berries)
- *Nandina domestica* heavenly bamboo (red-tinged foliage, shiny red berries)
- *Callicarpa* beauty berry (profusion of bright purple berries)
- *Ilex* species holly (berries and colourful foliage)
- Trailing ivy (colourful foliage)
- Cedar, fir, balsam and hemlock boughs (the mainstay of arrangements)
- Assorted cones (have fun looking for different shapes and sizes)
- *Cornus* species dogwood (colourful red stems)
- Rosehips (red, red, red!)
- *Cotoneaster* species (red berries)
- *Vaccinium* species huckleberries (more red!)

Never wildcraft from nature with a clearcut mentality. Take only what you need in consideration of the impact on the remaining ecosystem.

Gift ideas for gardeners

- Bird feeders (squirrel proof!)
- Bags of bird food
- Suet or peanut blocks
- Great gardening books... so many to choose from!
- A trug or basket to put a selection of gifts in
- Almond biscotti, for gardening tea breaks
- A bulb planter (with a bag of bulbs, too?)
- A dibber – great for planting bulbs, garlic, peas, onions and leeks
- Garden stakes, tied with ribbon or raffia
- Bamboo poles, as above
- Gardening gloves, rubberized or leatherized for thorny plants!
- A woolly gardening hat
- Ear muffs – warm ears are a must!
- Felt liners for boots – cozy feet are another must!

ORGANICS

- Gumboots to go with liners
- Garden clogs – great for slipping in and out of the house
- Balls of green jute twine
- Hedge trimmer
- Hose reel
- A Korean hoe – a most useful hand tool
- Kneeling pads
- Gardener's hand cream or soap
- Relaxing bath salts for aching muscles!
- Gift certificate for a massage (even better!)
- Loppers
- Plant pots
- A lightweight wheelbarrow (gift wrapping could be a problem!)
- Secateurs – only the best quality will do
- Seeds
- Hand tools or gardening gadgets
- Tool hooks
- Outdoor thermometer and/or barometer
- Watering cans or spray wand
- A partridge and pears to hang in a tree
- Next year's garden calendar (or make one with pictures from your own garden)
- Aluminum plant tags, which last forever!
- A magazine subscription
- Membership to a gardening club
- Gift certificate from a local garden centre
- Season ticket to a local botanic garden
- Glass bowls filled with pebbles and paperwhites
- Pots of planted *Iris reticulata,* grape hyacinths, cyclamen or hyacinths
- An amaryllis bulb
- A gift certificate from you or the kids for gardening work that says "I'll turn the compost, rake the leaves or cut the lawn for one month."
- A mug, apron or T-shirt that says: "Gardening Forever – Housework Whenever!"
- A fridge magnet or coaster that says: "I Live in the Garden; I Only Sleep in the House!"

From A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide *by Carolyn Herriot. Second edition $24.95. Available from your favourite bookstore or order online at www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath*

Alternative medicine pioneers receive inaugural Dr. Rogers Prize

Dr. Marion Rogers presents Dr. Abram Hoffer with the Dr. Rogers Prize

On November 1, the first-ever recipients of the Dr. Rogers Prize for Excellence in Complementary and Alternative Medicine were announced at a gala ceremony and dinner at the Marriott Hotel in Vancouver. Dr. Andrew Weil, renowned for his work in alternative health, presented the keynote address.

The Dr. Rogers Prize is named for Dr. Roger Rogers, a UBC clinical associate professor emeritus who is also a recognized Canadian leader in CAM. Dr. Rogers began offering alternative treatments in Vancouver in the mid-1970s and later co-founded the Centre for Integrated Healing, now known as InspireHealth, to help cancer patients who have had limited or no success with traditional medical treatments.

Dr. Rogers maintains that "… people have a right to try before they die," underlying his belief that mainstream or traditional medicine can be complemented by other treatments. The prize will be awarded biennially to individuals who make a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of CAM in Canada.

The recipients of the inaugural award were selected from 57 nominees accepted after a nation-wide call earlier this year. During lengthy deliberations, the judges attempted to arrive at a consensus for a single winner but judged that the contributions of these two recipients were of equal importance in terms of their impact on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in Canada, and decided that the $250,000 prize should be shared by Dr. Abram Hoffer of Victoria, BC, and Dr. Alastair Cunningham from Toronto.

Dr. Abram Hoffer was born in 1917 in Saskatchewan. Now based in Victoria, he is recognized worldwide for his psychiatric work in the development of biochemically based therapies based on the use of nutrition and vitamins in the treatment of schizophrenia, known as orthomolecular psychiatry. This general approach, known as orthomolecular medicine, includes the use of megavitamins.

While serving as the director of psychiatric research for the Saskatchewan Department of Public Health in Regina from 1950 to 1967, Hoffer noted that half the patients housed in the mental hospital were diagnosed as schizophrenics and that the conditions in the mental hospital and the treatment of these patients were poor; this inspired him to seek better ways to treat the mentally ill.

He used biochemistry and human physiology as an emergent psychiatric research paradigm and was critical of psychosomatic psychoanalysis and the lack of adequate definition and measurement in psychiatric methodology. Hoffer's theory is known as the adrenochrome hypothesis, which states that schizophrenics lack the proper ability to remove the hallucinogenic metabolite adrenochrome from their brains. He speculated that by using vitamin C to reduce adrenochrome back into adrenaline and using niacin as a methyl acceptor to prevent the conversion of noradrenaline into adrenaline that this would lead to a decrease in the concentration of hallucinogenic adrenochrome in the brain.

In 1967, Hoffer resigned his academic and director positions and entered into private psychiatric practice in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He created the *Journal of Schizophrenia* as a means of publishing articles related to orthomolecular psychiatry. After a few name changes over a number of years, this journal eventually became the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine* in 1986.

In 1976, Hoffer relocated to Victoria, BC, and continued with his private psychiatric practice until his retirement in 2005. Hoffer continues to provide nutritional consultations and he is still the editor of the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine*.

Dr. Cunningham's pioneering work was the important role of the mind and its effect on the immune system, particularly in cancer patients. In the face of extreme skepticism, he started teaching psychological and spiritual approaches to patients and documenting the effects. The first class was in his living room. Twenty-five years later, his program, known as The Healing Journey or Wellspring, has helped thousands of cancer patients and their families in Canada and around the world.

The Dr. Rogers Prize was presented to both recipients by Dr. Rogers' wife, Dr. Marion Rogers, who worked with her husband in family practice in Vancouver for 25 years. "There is no doubt CAM is growing across Canada and around the world. The Fraser Institute's latest study shows Canadians spend more than $7 billion annually on CAM therapies," she said.

"The prize was established to help encourage those who are essentially today's CAM pioneers, so that they can continue their work and take the CAM field forward in the future. We were so glad to see that the 57 people nominated came from just about every corner of the country, showing the widespread acceptance this relatively new medical field is gaining," she added.

"Like my husband, they are willing to challenge conventional thinking and dare to explore new territory without the comfort and assurance that accepted practice provides. It is this type of groundbreaking activity that the Dr. Rogers Prize wants to reward, encourage and inspire."

Dr. Rogers Prize is sponsored by the Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation, a Vancouver-based philanthropic organization.

Dr. Alastair Cunningham with Dr. Marion Rogers.

A scrooge for the ages

Dickens' timeless warning echoes through global corporatism

by Geoff Olson

In Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*, the ghost of Jacob Marley appears in the middle of the night to Ebenezer Scrooge. As his former colleague rattles his chains and laments the waste of his life, Scrooge fumbles for a proper response.

"'But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,' he says. 'Business!' cried the ghost, wringing its hands. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business: charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'"

It's a remarkable confession. Marley's ledger book tinkering was a drop of water; the "common welfare" of others was the ocean. In his failure to feel the slightest bit of empathy for his fellow beings, Marley's spiritual error was much greater than refusing to toss change at street urchins or not attending charity balls.

It's a theme that goes far beyond cheap, seasonal sentiment. From Christ kicking over the moneychangers' tables in the New Testament, to King Midas's golden touch, to Jimmy Stewart's struggle with a greedy bank owner in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the message resonates across the centuries: the desire for wealth and capital, untethered from communal purpose, is corrosive to the human spirit.

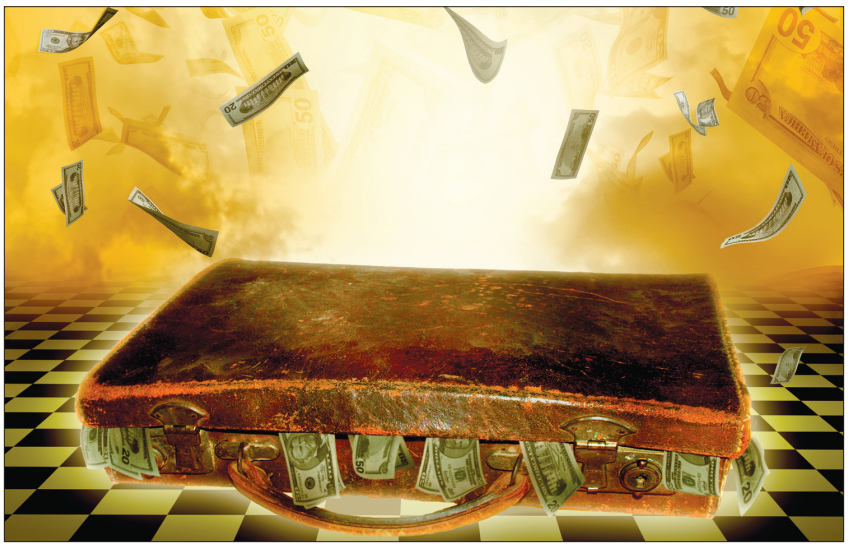
It's been such a persistent theme in western literature, art, music and religious parable; who could doubt its truth? But in the "real world" of tough-minded high finance, where "money talks and bullshit walks," we might as well be talking about greeting card sentiments. As the gap grows between the rich and the poor – both within nations and between them – the distribution of wealth and resources approaches disparities not seen since the "Gilded Age" of the late nineteenth century.

According to German federal legislator and author Norbert Blüm, there are almost 899 billionaires in the world; 102 names were added to the list of the billionaires' club in 2006 alone. Meanwhile, the bottom half of three billion people manage on less than two dollars a day, with 1.3 billion having less than one dollar a day. The 358 richest families own one half of the world's assets. The world's 500 largest private companies control 52 percent of the world's national product. In the US, according to a 2006 report in the *New York Times,* "The average top executive's salary at a big company was more than 170 times the average worker's earnings in 2004, up from a multiple of 68 in 1940, according to a study last year by Carola Frydman, a doctoral candidate at Harvard, and Raven E. Saks, an economist at the Federal Reserve."

If Marley's ghost materialized today in the corporate boardrooms or legislative halls, there's little doubt he'd wail and rattle his chains over the disparities created by Scrooge's spiritual descendents. But although the problem is global, there are still places where there has been successful resistance. We'll get to that later.

An instructive case of the current class divide in the US can be found in the recent indictment of David H. Brooks, 53, former CEO of DHB Industries. The company was the leading supplier of body armour to the US military and the "Interceptor Vest" was its flagship product.

Brooks and his former chief operating officer Sandra Hatfield have been charged with manipulating DHB's financial records to increase earnings and profit margins, thereby inflating the price of DHB's stock. When an employee told Hatfield the inventory of vests was overvalued, she allegedly responded that the company could not "take a hit" of reducing the valuation to the correct amount. During this time, the pair sold several million shares of DHB stock. Brooks made $185 million from this sale.



According to a report in the *Trentonian*, "Brooks also is accused of using DHB funds to buy or lease luxury vehicles for himself and family members, and to pay for vacations, jewellery, cosmetic surgery, country club bills and family celebrations. He also used DHB funds for his private horse racing business, prosecutors said."

In May of 2005, the US Marines recalled more than 5,000 DHB armoured vests after doubts were raised about their effectiveness. The suits allegedly couldn't take a hit from a nine-mm round. "By that time, Brooks had pocketed over $250 million in war windfalls, "wrote reporter Anthony Lappé.

In 2005, in what Lappé called the "… world's most obscene coming of age party," Brooks lavished $10 million dollars on his daughter's *bat mitzvah*. Among the performers flown in to New York's Rainbow Room to entertain the girl and three hundred of her closest friends, were Don Henley, Stevie Nicks, Kenny G, Aerosmith and rapper 50 Cent. Tom Petty hosted the celebration.

Could there be any more cogent example of what author Naomi Klein calls "disaster capitalism" than a war profiteer organizing a musical Rome-in-decline spectacle for his little girl? (One of the most obvious examples of disaster capitalism is the fallout from Katrina, when privatizing vultures descended on the public purse in New Orleans.)

While Brooks' indictment made news, the leisure time excesses of the hyper-rich usually go unreported. The top one percent has done something of a disappearing act, secluding themselves in gated mansions, holidaying in high-end resorts and heading to swank events escorted by private security. Their absence from the scene, if not from the society page, creates a social blank screen upon which the rest of us can project our shadows. (Brooks is a piece of work, but it doesn't bode well if the class war convinces either side that they are up against inhuman monsters.)

Yet there is little doubt that the comfortable isolation of money, power and influence creates a kind of hermetically sealed world, where the elite are rarely exposed to the experiences and opinions of anyone other than "nice" people like themselves. And after the first few billion, money has little to do with the trifling sums required for food, shelter and leisure. It becomes a kind of numerical peg for status. It's a way of keeping score, through buying everything from conglomerates to the company of rapper 50 Cent.

As for those at the bottom of society, they're doing their own disappearing act. "Our poor are like people in Madagascar," wrote James Fallows in *New York Times Magazine* in 2000. "We feel bad for them, but they live someplace else." The poor, comprised of more whites than ever, have "… become invisible," according to the reporter – largely through the professional and leisure-time insulation of folks like Fallows, who moves in the charmed circle of East Coast mainstream media.

The class divide in North America has become so wide and so obvious that mainstream media rarely examines it as an institutional problem, if they ever did. It just somehow happened, through the magic of the marketplace. Adam Smith's "invisible hand," moving as mysteriously as Marley's ghost, began to reward the few while smacking down the many.

In October of 2007, *New York Time Magazine* revisited the matter of the class divide in the Big Apple, devoting an issue to "City Life in the Second Gilded Age." It could just as well have called the theme, "Get Used to It." The cover story was illustrated with a gold-painted manhole cover.

An essay on the Internet by writer Steve Kangas entitled *The Origins of the Overclass* supplies some necessary historical context. The wealthy in the US have always used many methods to accumulate wealth, he notes, but it was not until the mid-1970s that these methods coalesced into a superbly organized, cohesive and efficient machine.

"After 1975," Kangas writes, "it became greater than the sum of its parts, a smooth flowing organization of advocacy groups, lobbyists, think tanks, conservative foundations and PR firms that hurtled the richest one percent into the stratosphere."

Years of legislative gains for consumer groups, environmentalists and labour groups had given the powers that be a bit of a fright. It was time to get busy and apply some tried and true techniques.

"During the 1970s, these men would take the propaganda and operational techniques they had learned in the Cold War and apply them to the Class War. Therefore, it is no surprise that the American version of the machine bears an uncanny resemblance to the foreign versions designed to fight communism," Kangas notes.

It may have been a war of words, but

it was a war nonetheless, and one with real world casualties. When *Harper's* former editor Lewis Lapham investigated the history of rightwing think tanks and foundations in the US, he was surprised to discover what was, by definition, a conspiracy: a decades-long effort by the very wealthiest, using millions of dollars and experts-for-hire, to influence policies on taxation, regulation, consumer and labour laws, by constructing a pipeline into media, academia and government. Simply put, the powers that be needed to get things back on track after America's dangerous experiment in representative democracy. (A similar pattern with think tanks, foundations and public relations firms occurred here in Canada.)

In every generation, members of the overclass rediscover that human evolution has peaked, by happy coincidence, with themselves. From the crib to the country club, they learn through osmosis that the world is their blue-green bauble. No further instruction is required; they can always hire smart people to figure out the details. But it's not easy work; there are always difficult, dangerous people out there on the outskirts of empire, interfering in the inalienable right of the few to cheap energy, resources and labour.

The bottom half of three billion people manage on less than two dollars a day, with 1.3 billion having less than one dollar a day. The 358 richest families own one half of the world's assets.

It takes a lot of time and money to convince the rubes at home in the US and Canada that their interests are the same as those of the overclass. People aren't that stupid; it takes years of programming through media and PR firms to condition them into the right responses. Consider the term "free trade." In retrospect, the alphabet soup of trade agreements – NAFTA, CAFTA, FTA and FTAA – was never really about trade, per se, or even freedom and agreement. It was about investment and the global displacement of local markets by corporate conglomerates. Globally, this 30-year program has vastly enriched a small percentage of players at the expense of blue collar workers, who had about as much democratic input into the decision-making as medieval peasants on a feudal estate.

Yet globalization is now widely recognized as a botched experiment, even among the negotiators themselves. In fact, those who believe that protest accomplishes nothing need look no further than the famous "Battle of Seattle" in 1999, which led to a collapse of that year's WTO meeting. Successive WTO meetings, from Doha to Cancun, ground to a halt when poorer countries refused to sign on to the *status quo*.

Latin Americans, in particular, refuse to play the same old game. A growing number of nations are rejecting the IMF/World Bank bromides about economic growth opportunities, after experiencing the privatization of public services, resource rape and extortion through debt. The old games of overt and covert oppression don't work anymore. The election of brown-skinned born peasants to high office, such as Evo Morales in Bolivia and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, are the most obvious signs of this transformation. From Buenos Aires to Caracas to Managua, the poor are starting to define their own destinies, after decades of exile from positions of influence.

We began with the tale of former CEO David Brooks, the battle vest manufacturer. We'll end with the story of another man of influence, from the other side of the equator.

It was chilly summer morning in Buenos Aires. After a light breakfast, Dr. René Favaloro walked to his bathroom, put a gun to his chest and pulled the trigger. The shot to his own heart, resounding through Argentina in late July of 2000, made for a tragically ironic end for the 77-year old Favaloro, a world-famous cardiac specialist who was the first doctor in the world to map out and perform heart bypass surgery 33 years earlier in the US.

Favaloro's suicide resulted in an outpouring of national grief and a flood of visitors with floral wreaths to the front of his clinic. Argentineans put the blame for his suicide squarely on free market economics. Favaloro's own writings allude to his despair at the increasing privatization of health in Argentina and the fiscal crisis in his own clinic.

The patrician, silver-haired doctor refused to turn away uninsured patients from his clinic, insisting "… the right to live" was a given for all Argentineans. Instituted in 1992, Favaloro's clinic was Latin America's most advanced heart institute, training over four hundred doctors, who are now spread across the world. Favaloro hoped his foundation would become a model for public health care globally.

At the insistence of Washington and the IMF, Argentina and much of the rest of Latin America instituted free-market reforms in the early 1990s. Government subsidies to Favaloro's foundation were slashed while US-style health care practices were introduced. At the same time, millions of Argentineans, pushed out of work by public and private downsizing, lost health care coverage altogether.

Favaloro himself was precise in localizing the blame for the escalating health crisis, in which the treatment of uninsured patients became increasingly untenable. Two weeks before his death, in a memo to his staff, he excoriated economic globalization, stating that free-market reforms are "… better referred to as a neo-feudalism that is bringing this world toward a social disaster where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer."

Favaloro wrote to a friend expressing the personal dimensions of this struggle: "I am living one of the worst moments of my life, just as the rest of this nation. I have become a servant knocking on doors looking for money to keep the foundation alive." His appeals to private donors failed to make up the losses brought on by free-market reforms.

"René had fought hard to give his patients equal treatment," said Mariano Favaloro, the foundation's chief of surgery and cousin to the doctor, in a story in the *Washington Post*. "He felt this new world we live in could no longer permit it, and he ended his life."

The *Post* story tells how Ismael Garcia, a 57-year-old farmer from Patagonia, was accepted by René Favaloro as a patient, even though Garcia could not pay. He wept when told about Favaloro's death.

"I wanted to meet the man who allowed my life to be saved, I wanted to at least shake his hand," cried Garcia while his daughter held his bandaged neck. "But I never got a chance to do it. Favaloro was too good for this world."

René Favaloro's trade as a doctor was small compared to his comprehensive business in making medicine available to those who needed it most. His story had a major influence on Argentineans, giving a human face to the impersonal pressures of finance and foreign capital that wracked their country in the first few years of the millennium. In 2003, the pro-US candidate Carlos Menem failed to win Argentina's presidential race, signalling the nation's move toward greater political and economic autonomy. Still, the most dramatic rejection of "The Washington Consensus" has been elsewhere, in Bolivia and Venezuela.

It's ironic that Latin Americans are learning the lesson that we have yet to fully understand in North America: a lesson about the spiritually and socially destructive aspects of greed, foreshadowed in the work of Dickens. In *A Christmas Carol*, Marley's ghost tells Scrooge he has been seven years dead, and swiftly travelling all the time "… in an incessant torment of remorse." Scrooge helpfully offers that he must have covered a lot of ground in that time. Enraged, Marley's ghost flings a length of chain heavily to the ground.

"'Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,' cried the phantom, 'not to know, that ages of incessant labour, by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed.

"'At this time of the rolling year,' the spectre said, 'I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!'"

By the end of Dickens' classic tale, Scrooge has been terrified into an epiphany. His future is not written in stone, and it's not too late to undo his bad prospects. Against all odds, a bitter, anal-retentive pencil pusher learns to feel compassion for the suffering of others. Though it's too late for his former colleague, Scrooge has learned a few things about wealth, workers and chains.

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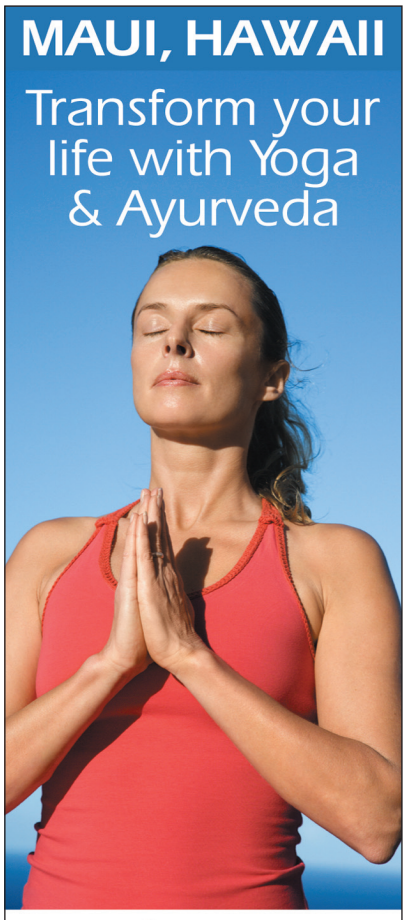
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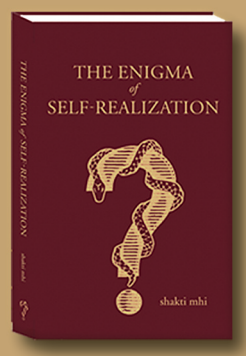

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Longing for wholeness

THE POWER OF NOW *Eckhart Tolle*

The reason the romantic love relationship is such an intense and universally sought-after experience is that it seems to offer liberation from a deep-seated state of fear, need, lack and incompleteness that is part of the human condition in its unredeemed and unenlightened state. There is a physical as well as a psychological dimension to this state.

On the physical level, you are obviously not whole; nor will you ever be. You are either a man or a woman, which is to say, one-half of the whole. On this level, the longing for wholeness – the return to oneness – manifests as male-female attraction, man's need for a woman, woman's need for a man. It is an almost irresistible urge for union with the opposite energy polarity.

The root of this physical urge is a spiritual one: the longing for an end to duality, a return to the state of wholeness. Sexual union is the closest you can get to this state on the physical level. This is why it is the most deeply satisfying experience the physical realm can offer. But sexual union is no more than a fleeting glimpse of wholeness, an instant of bliss. You are given a tantalizing glimpse of heaven, but you are not allowed to dwell there and you find yourself again in a separate body.

On the psychological level, the sense of lack and incompleteness is, if anything, even greater than on the physical level. As long as you are identified with the mind, you have an externally derived sense of self… nothing is ever enough to give it lasting fulfillment. Its fear remains; its sense of lack and neediness remains.

But then that special relationship comes along. It seems to be the answer to all the ego's problems and to meet all its needs. At least this is how it appears at first. All the other things you derived your sense of self from now become relatively insignificant. You now have a single focal point that replaces them all, that gives meaning to your life, and through which you define your identity: the person you are "in love" with.

Your world now has a centre: the loved one. The fact that the centre is outside you and that, therefore, you still have an externally derived sense of self does not seem to matter at first. What matters is that the underlying feelings of incompleteness are no longer there, or are they? Have they dissolved, or do they continue to exist underneath the happy surface reality?

If in your relationships you experience both "love" and the opposite of love – attack, emotional violence, and so on – it is likely you are confusing ego attachment and addictive clinging with love. You cannot love your partner one moment and attack them the next. True love has no opposite.

If your "love" has an opposite, it is not love but a strong ego need for a more complete and deeper sense of self, a need that the other person temporarily meets. It is the ego's substitute for salvation, and, for a short time, it almost does feel like salvation.

But there comes a point when your partner behaves in ways that fail to meet your needs, or rather those of your ego. At this point, the ego is still unconsciously hoping that its attack or its attempts at manipulation will be sufficient punishment to induce your partner to change their behaviour so it can use them again as a cover-up for your pain.

You cannot love your partner one moment and attack them the next. True love has no opposite.

This is one reason why most people are always trying to escape from the present moment and are seeking some kind of salvation in the future. The first thing that they might encounter if they focused their attention on the Now is their own pain, and this is what they fear.

If they only knew how easy it is to access in the Now the power of presence that dissolves the past and its pain, the reality that dissolves the illusion. If they only knew how close they are to their own reality, how close to God.

Avoidance of relationships in an attempt to avoid pain is not the answer either. The pain is there anyway. Three failed relationships in as many years are more likely to force you into awakening than three years on a desert island or shut away in your room. But if you could bring intense presence into your aloneness, that would work for you too.

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The path to bliss

UNIVERSE WITHIN *Gwen Randall-Young*

SPIRITUALITY

When you follow your bliss... doors will open where you would not have thought there would be doors, and where there wouldn't be a door for anyone else.

– Joseph Campbell

I often hear people say they do not know what they really want to do with their lives. They have a sense that what they are doing is not what they came here to do, but they have no idea what their life's purpose might be. They try to figure it out intellectually, comparing different, possible options to see if one really draws them. Usually, however, this process does not bring them any closer to their true path.

I encourage them to think about what they really enjoy, what they love and what feels important to them. I ask them to think about the times in their lives when they felt the happiest. I use this analogy: imagine that your true path is a shiny, metal road and your heart is a very powerful magnet. When you are on your path, the path "grabs" you and pulls you along. When you drift away from the path, the attraction to wherever you are is weaker.

One might wonder why it should be such a struggle to honour our deepest self and allow our lives to be a manifestation of our essence. After all, our souls come here for a reason and that reason should unfold effortlessly into a life design that is like our unique signature upon this earth.

Things start to go awry early on, when parents look at their newborn and begin formulating ideas about the kind of being they will create out of this bundle of sweetness. Later, ego takes on a powerful role in wanting to please parents, teachers and even peers. Ego also learns a lot about the rewards that come from conforming and being good at the things society values.

Interestingly, individuals who stick to their own path and eschew the common culture are considered to be eccentric. They live their lives according to some inner standard and direction which others may have a hard time understanding. Typically, even if isolated, they are profoundly content. They do not much care what others think of them and have no interest in joining the race others are so avidly running.

We cannot learn about our souls by thinking about them. We cannot "figure out" our soul. Rather, soul *reveals* itself to us, in those quiet, still moments when we are not thinking, but simply being.

And those moments arise when we are doing something or are in a place that causes us to totally lose ourselves. There is such a resonance between that moment we are experiencing and the vibration of our own soul that we transcend awareness of our ego and the world. This is bliss.

In doing things that give us this feeling of bliss, we are surrendering the need to plan our lives, to figure things out, and turning it over to the guidance of soul. When we are following our bliss we are letting soul take the lead. It also means we spend more time in alignment with our souls. The more we do this, the more comfortable it feels to be there, and the more we become aware of aspects of our lives that are out of alignment with who we truly are and who we need to be.

Nature has given us a most powerful compass to access and maintain our progress along our soul's true path. It is that feeling of joy that comes from within our own being and which is not dependent upon anyone else. It comes when we are honouring our own soul.

We need to make the honouring of our souls our prime motivation, rather than a guilty pleasure we indulge in once in a while when we can take a break from work or our regular routine. Who knows which doors might open?

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and the author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. *For articles and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca*

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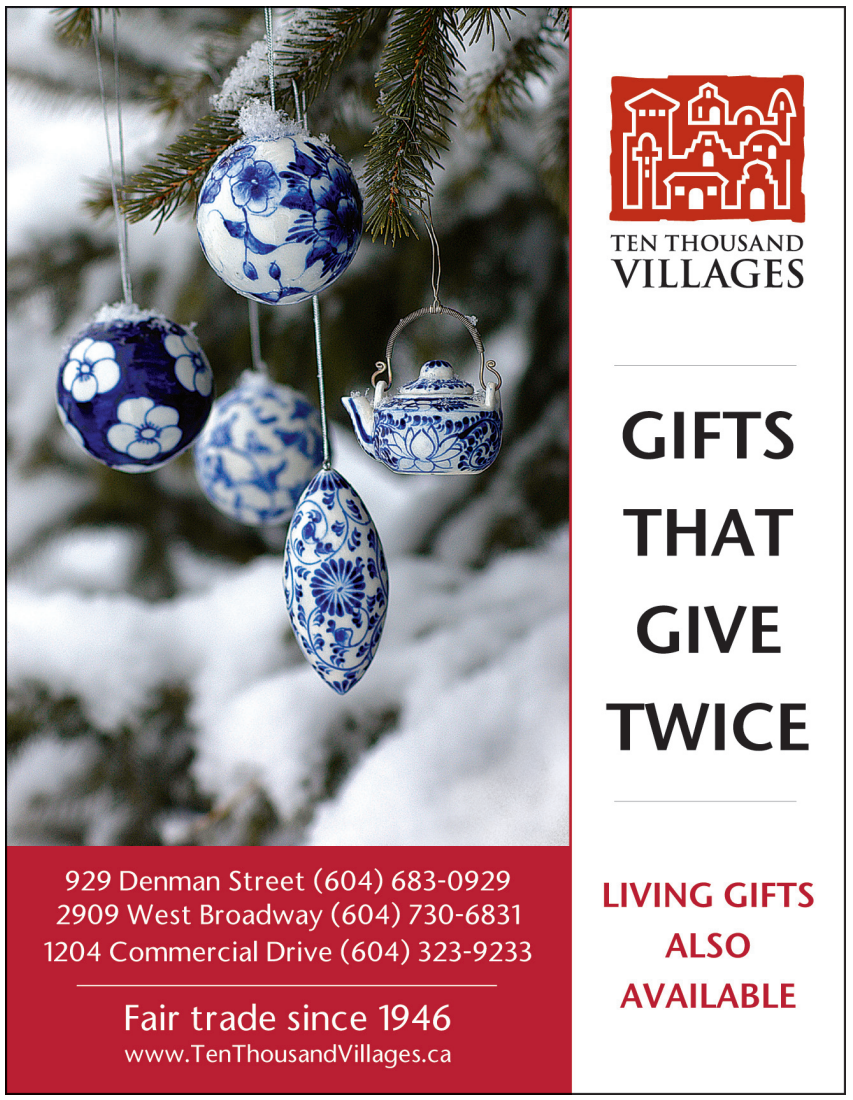
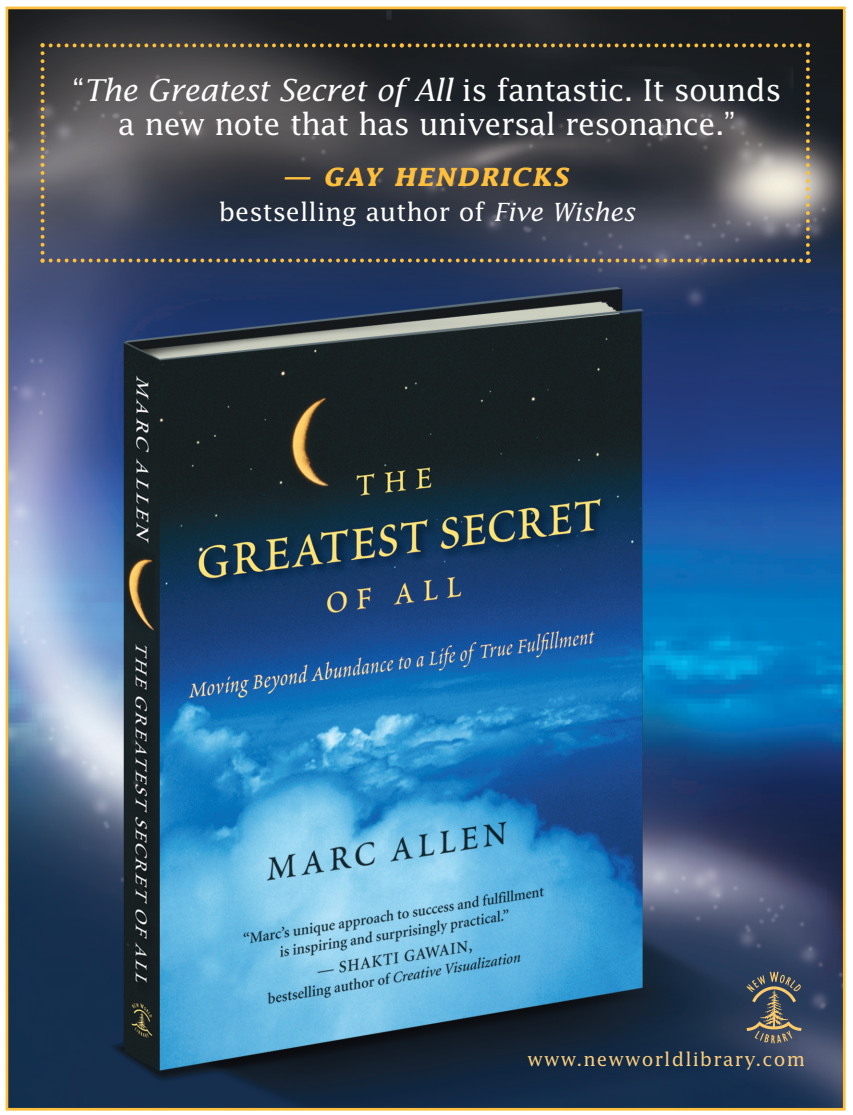
There is such a resonance between that moment we are experiencing and the vibration of our own soul that we transcend awareness of our ego and the world. This is bliss.

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Prevent cancer now

EARTHFUTURE *Guy Dauncey*

It all started in Philadelphia in April of 2002 when I attended the annual Assembly of the United Methodist Women as a guest speaker on global climate change. There was a lot of singing and a lot of sisterhood, but, alas, not a lot of interest in global warming. There was an amazing conference bookshop, however, where I bought a copy of Sandra Steingraber's book *Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment*.

Without knowing where it would lead me, I holed myself up in my hotel bedroom and read it from cover to cover. Sandra is a poet, scientist and ecologist diagnosed with cancer as a young woman – a disease that had afflicted other members of her adoptive family. In her book, she uses her poetic imagination and her scientific research to deeply explore the polluted nature of rural Illinois where she was raised, and the world in general. She writes: "In 1950, less than 10 percent of cornfields were sprayed with pesticides. In 1993, 99 percent were chemically treated," including with atrazine, suspected of causing breast cancer and ovarian cancer in humans.

.....

***Prevent Cancer Now* is small, but our ambitions are big.**

.....

My book *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change* had just been published; I had just dreamed up The Solutions Project, and I was casting around for the next big topic that I would focus on while continuing my work on climate change and sustainable energy. Sandra had me hooked; it had to be cancer.

Over the next five years, I immersed myself in learning everything I could about cancer's environmental origins. My trail led me to Liz Armstrong, a cancer activist from Erin, Ontario, and then to Anne Wordsworth, a cancer researcher from Toronto. Together, we completed *Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic*, published by New Society Publishers in May of this year.

We are very proud of our book and its challenge to the widespread belief that cancer is overwhelmingly caused by our personal lifestyle choices, including diet. There is so much evidence that points in a different direction, linking cancer to the pollution of our bodies by chemicals and radiation in our homes, schools, workplaces and the environment-at-large, combined with the absence of healthy organic local food, which is now getting more of the attention it deserves.

It was a privilege to be able to lay out the evidence, along with so many solutions. The cord blood of a baby born in North America today is contaminated with 230 industrial chemicals, 190 of which have been linked to cancer. How can this be cause for anything but anger – then action? It is not just humans, either. During the 1990s, one in four of the beluga whales in the polluted St. Lawrence Seaway died of cancer – the same rate as humans, even though the belugas didn't smoke, eat junk food, or tan themselves in the noonday sun. The belugas that swam in the open Atlantic remained healthy.

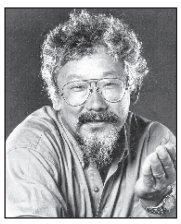
The evidence was overpowering, and our book called for activism, but here in Canada there was little happening. So Liz and I decided to form a non-profit society called Prevent Cancer *Now* to build a Canada-wide movement to eliminate the preventable causes of cancer. We drew together a board of directors and poured our attention into organizing a big conference that took place in Ottawa in May of 2006. Liz also organized an annual Run, Walk and Roll for Cancer Prevention, since every new society needs funding.

Prevent Cancer *Now* is small, but our ambitions are big. Last month, we held a retreat at Liz's home in rural Ontario where we planned ahead. We want to tackle lindane, a very toxic pesticide and a suspected carcinogen that is banned throughout Europe, but still allowed for use in Canada as a treatment for head lice on children. We want to do more public education. We are lining up a project to awaken teenagers to the need to eat organic food and avoid toxic products.

We also need more members to help us eliminate the preventable causes of cancer. Will you join us? Will you donate to us? Will you help us with this all-important work, so that we can grow, and take on greater challenges? Will you make this a Christmas gift to yourself, and your friends?

We start these things on faith, but faith needs friends, for we cannot do it alone. See www.preventcancernow.ca. For information about the book, visit www.earthfuture.com/cancer

Guy Dauncey is co-chair of Prevent Cancer Now, executive director of The Solutions Project and president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association. He lives in Victoria. Visit www.earthfuture.com



The bugs in free trade

SCIENCE MATTERS *David Suzuki with Faisal Moola*

ENVIRONMENT

We've probably all heard the urban legend about the unsuspecting shopper who takes home a bunch of bananas from the supermarket, only to have a tarantula later crawl out and terrorize the family. Well, new research shows that there could be some truth to the story.

As it turns out, spiders are excellent hitchhikers and often end up taking rides across countries, continents and oceans. According to a report published in the journal *Diversity and Distributions*, spiders are thumbing rides more and more often as global trade increases. And as our planet heats up from global warming, more spiders might decide to make their vacations permanent.

Researchers with the University of Bern in Switzerland looked at 87 alien species of spider from 25 different families known to have been introduced to Europe from other continents in the past 150 years. They found a near-linear progression of increased spider introductions correlating with an increase in global trade over the same time frame.

Both the volume of trade and the number of trade routes around the world have expanded greatly over the past century. At the same time, the duration of each of these trips has shortened due to more efficient shipping routes and techniques, and faster forms of shipping, such as air transport. Less time spent en route increases a hitchhiker's odds of surviving a trip, which make it more likely that the creature will be able to set up home in a new location.

Spiders are also survivors. A three-season study from New Zealand in 2002 found that 31 alien adult spiders of seven different species, including several that were poisonous, plus nine egg sacs survived trips from California in containers of table grapes, despite the containers having been fumigated and kept at a chilly one degree celsius.

Notably, researchers also found that the spiders most likely to survive long-distance shipping were all significantly larger than their native counterparts of the same family. They concluded that, as a result of increasing global trade, at least one alien spider species will likely settle in Europe every year for the near future. This number could increase if global warming makes Europe more hospitable to spiders from warmer climates.

The ecological impact of alien spiders is not well known. However, as with any introduced species, spiders have the potential to displace native species and disrupt local ecosystems. Depending on the type of spider, there could be human health implications as well.

But if invading, alien spiders seem like a small concern in the big scheme of things, consider that spiders aren't the only unwanted organisms that can hitchhike on our increasingly wide and dense global trade network. A recent review published in the journal *Ibis*, for example, reported on how the highly contagious avian bird influenza H5N1 spread across Europe. Again, the most likely culprit is global trade.

Many people originally thought that migratory birds were the vector that allowed bird flu to spread from China throughout Asia to Africa and Europe. However, French researchers found that the pattern of spread didn't follow bird migration routes, but rather trade routes. And they cite case after case of known transmissions through domesticated birds. Their conclusion: "In summary, although it remains possible that a migratory bird can spread the virus HPAI H5N1 and contaminate poultry, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the hypothesis that human movements of domestic poultry have been the main agent of global dispersal of the virus to date."

We live in an increasingly interconnected world. That brings with it a host of new challenges and new responsibilities. Whether it's big spiders or dangerous viruses, we'd best find ways to minimize the ecological and human health threats posed by our global economy.

The world is shrinking. And we'd better get used to it.

We'd best find ways to minimize the ecological and human health threats posed by our global economy. The world is shrinking. And we'd better get used to it.

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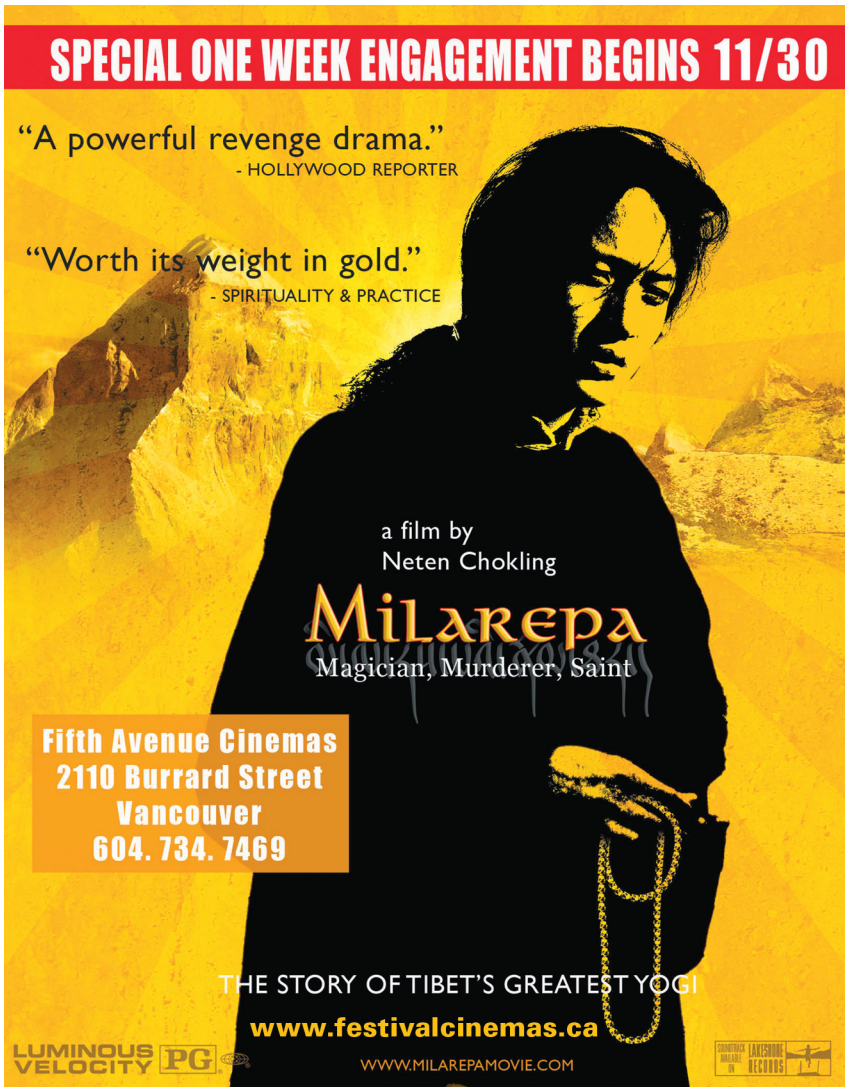

Dam it all!

FILMS WORTH WATCHING *Robert Alstead*

In October, I attended the Planet in Focus Film Festival in Toronto for a screening of my film *You Never Bike Alone*. One of the other BC films I caught was *49 Megawatts*, made by Bryan Smith, a kayaker who discovered that a dam was going to be built on one of his favourite paddling places, the Ashlu River near Squamish. His response, after initially being incredulous that anybody would want to develop such a beautiful, natural setting, was to make a film. His 30-minute documentary *49 Megawatts*, completed earlier this year, shows just how easy it to turn a healthy, attractive ecosystem into a gravel pit in the name of "green energy."

Regular readers of this magazine will know something of the trouble at the Ashlu. (*Stolen Rivers*, a special feature on independent power projects, was first published in *Common Ground* in October 2006 and again in October 2007). The independent power project (IPP) proposed for the Ashlu is one of potentially hundreds that the BC Liberals are pushing to implement on rivers across the province. With a brazenness that's become a hallmark of the province's dealings with local communities, when local government voted against Ledcor's IPP permit for the Ashlu, the province introduced Bill 30 to override its decision.

Smith brings together a commendable range of voices – industry experts, professionals, mayors Whistler and Squamish), academics, energy specialists and locals – to grapple with the issues. The film points out that the IPP in question, which involves boring a tunnel through a mountain, is clearly not "small" – defined as under 50 megawatts by law – and should have undergone a more rigorous public planning process.

Conspicuously absent are spokespersons from Ledcor, the provincial government and the Squamish Nation, who after initially opposing the project came out in support of it. Smith says they declined to do interviews. The 30-minute Quicktime movie can be downloaded for free from www.Ashlu.info. The direct link is: http://www.downstreammedia.net/TheRangeLife/Video/49megawattsweb.mov

If you are very quick you can catch Jia Zhang-Ke's *Still Life (Sanxia Haoren)*, a moody drama set against the construction of Three Gorges megadam project in China. The film captures the surreal atmosphere of a rapidly transforming landscape and the plight of its displaced townspeople with an artful eye and a dry humour. (Opens December 1, Vancity.)

Doris Dörrie's *How to Cook Your Life* (out now) follows Edward Espe Brown, a Bay Area chef and Zen priest who, since writing the popular *The Tassajara Bread Book*, published in 1970, has been putting the Zen into food, reminding us that we need to reconnect with our food, waste less and take more time for a deeper, more present appreciation of cooking. Food, Brown reiterates, should be treated as essential as eyesight instead of as "… just fuel for the human machine."

Brown appears at workshops in Buddhist centres in Austria and California and in formal interviews.

Dörrie is respectful of her subject, but she is not afraid to show us his human shortcomings, such as his angry outburst when he can't remove the plastic cap from a bottle of oil. Brown also recalls his personal struggles and breakthroughs, seasoning stories with self-deprecating humour and regret. The message is a nourishing one, although, at 94 minutes, the film would have benefited from being shorter.

After a 10-year absence, Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now*) returns behind the camera with *Youth Without Youth,* a World War Two era fantasy that blends ideas about the transmigration of souls with philosophy, spirituality, love and the cruelty of time. Tim Roth plays a 70-year-old professor who is struck by lightning and miraculously finds he has returned to his youthful self. The film, based on Romanian author Mircea Eliade's novella, explores its metaphysical themes as the prof flees the Nazis across Europe. The early reviews have not been favourable, but this is Coppola so you can be sure that you will take something away from it.

Two of the best actors around, Laura Linney and Philip Seymour Hoffman, play 40-something siblings who find themselves caring for their dementia-struck father in *The Savages* (due out December 26). The film, directed by Tamara Jenkins (*Slums of Beverly Hills*), has been praised for its intimate slice-of-life portrait and smart writing, showing there's humour and optimism even in life's darkest moments.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver-based bicycle documentary You Never Bike Alone*, available on DVD at www.youneverbikealone.com*

49 Megawatts tells the story of Ashlu River's destruction. Kayaking photos by Stephen Hunt.

All at once

TWENTY SOMETHING *Ishi Dinim*

I've made this journey to Nelson many times before, every year since I can remember. The long drive in different seasons, sometimes leisurely, more often a race to get there or back at record pace. This occasion is different though – my method of travel and my motivation. Today is my first go at flying there.

Deadlines looming again; time's been passing me by, too much on my mind. How often do I really have to contemplate never seeing someone again? Something about getting on planes does that to me every time. Our small twin prop rattles into the frozen morning sky.

Get on a plane in Vancouver bound for Castlegar with my mom. The stewardess says, "The fog at our destination is not looking good. The pilot will decide whether to land or fly back to Vancouver when we get close enough."

Deadlines looming again; time's been passing me by, too much on my mind. How often do I *really* have to contemplate never seeing someone again? Something about getting on planes does that to me every time. Our small twin prop rattles into the frozen morning sky.

I marvel at the steam rising as the sun pushes it from rivers and valleys. I watch the gridlock grind its way towards the clogged heart of the city. The lamp poles, cars, houses, cities become miniature. Snow-crested peaks, as far as my eyes can strain; the immensity of it all makes me feel inconsequential.

I recall the words of a lady-pilot on a flight from Omaha to Lincoln, Nebraska: "Just remember you're hurtling through the air in a thin metal tube with wings, *so* wear your seatbelts." After countless voyages along manicured highways, this new perspective is both amazingly beautiful and frightening: a bird's eye view pattern made of clear-cuts and strip-mines.

Just yesterday Lincoln, Fitch and I cried together. It doesn't matter that one of us is a baby; we were feeling the weight of the world and found support amongst each other.

We drove around helping complete things that needed doing. On the last leg of our endeavours, we found ourselves in a parking lot.

Parked in front of us was a hefty SUV, idling. After nearly 10 minutes, my friend said, "I wish Steve was here. I hear he's been telling people to turn their cars off." I thought I'd try to embody Steve and muster the courage to go ask the lady to think about our fragile planet. Instead, we talked about relationships and got cold without our engine running, slightly fazed by the jerry can on the back seat giving off its scent.

I ask my friend Isabel tonight in the hospital what I should write about. She answers, "Ishi, you should write about how fragile the world is."

It seems so appropriate. How can I refuse such a substantial topic? The leaves are falling off the trees again and I genuinely know what she means in my bones. But how does this all make words?

In all of this, I sit in her house filled with memories, swollen with love. I remember unconditional friendship and honesty built upon the truth of a unique understanding. In this house, I write about fragility.

I think back to stories of three women I'm lucky enough to have been here with: relationships broken, mended, and strengthened.

All with a profound chapter written in this place.

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently he is doing what he can for himself and the planet. contactishi@yahoo.ca

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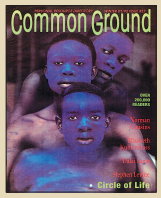

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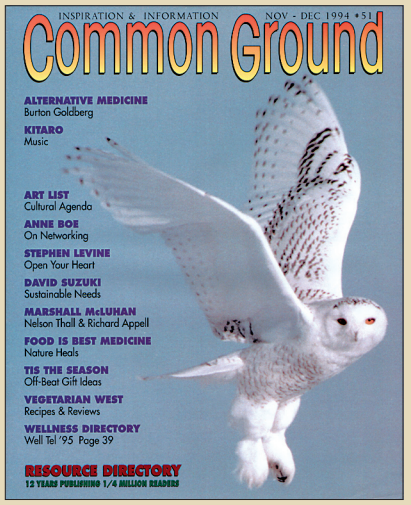

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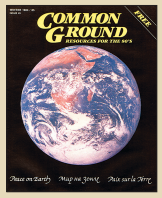

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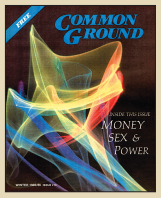

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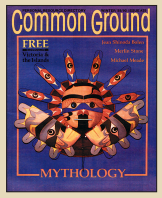

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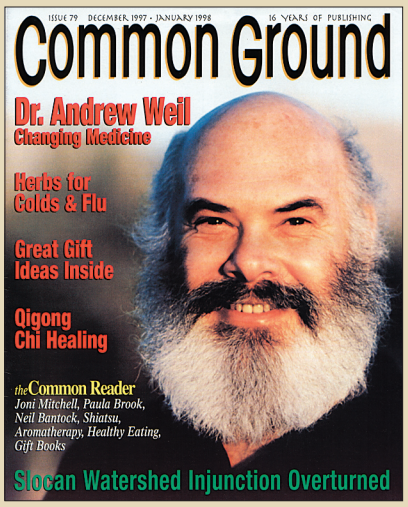
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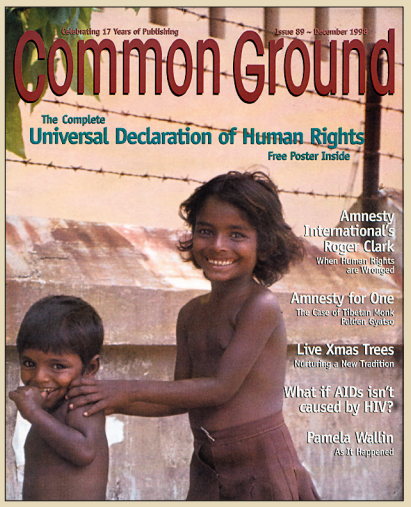

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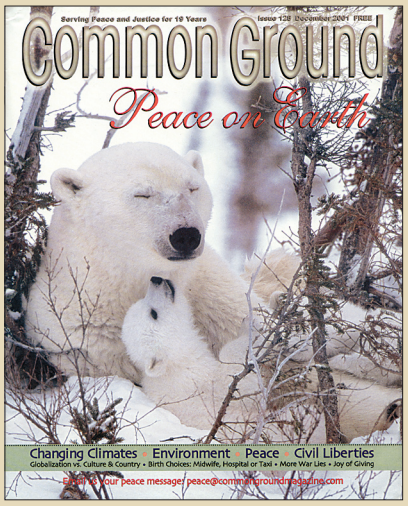
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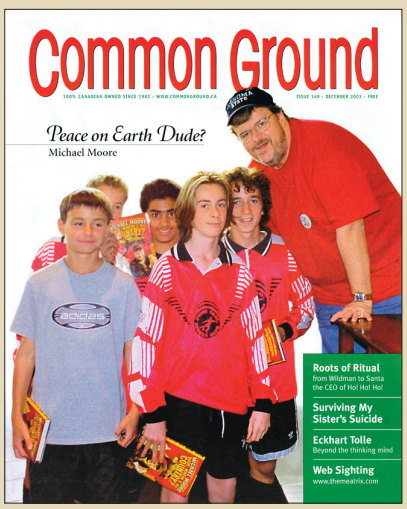

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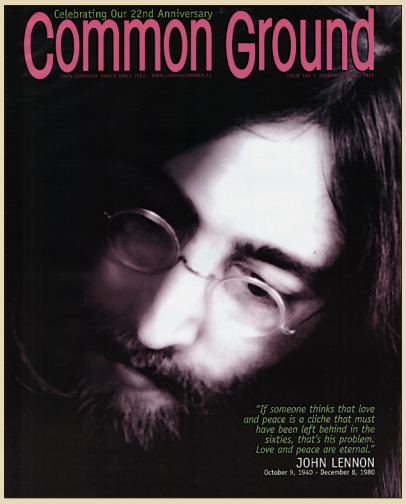
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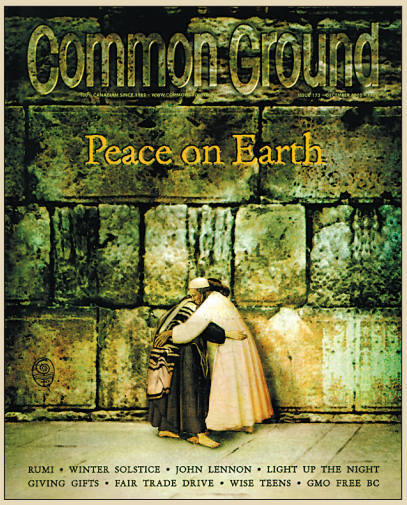
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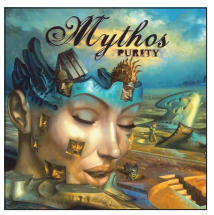

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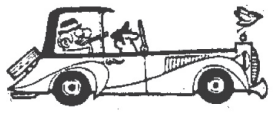

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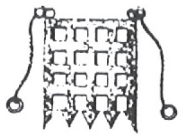

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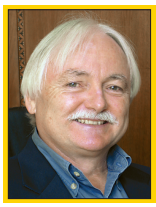

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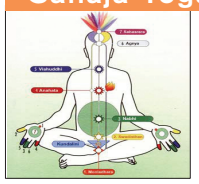

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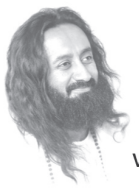
WEDNESDAYS: MEMBERS $7 NON-MEMBERS $8
Dec 05 *Mediumship Demonstration* Gloria Brough
Dec 12 *Open Circle* Deborah White
Dec 19 *Winter Solstice Celebration* Julia Schoennagel
Dec 26 Closed for the holidays – back Wed Jan 9
SPECIAL EVENTS
Sun Dec 16 Festival of Lights • Sun Dec 30 Morning Service
Sunday services; mediumship demonstrations; circles; spiritual healing; hospital & hospice visits; counselling; marriages & unions; namings; funerals & memorials



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DEC 7-9
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DEC 8
Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: Saturday, 7-10pm. Learn to experience insight/healing from your Nature Spirit guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636, www.shamanichealing.info

DEC 12
Winning the War on Cancer: Speaker: Dr. John Yang, Dean, PCU College. The power of self-healing and more, Free, 7-9pm, 5021 Kingsway, 604.433.1299.

DEC 12
Christmas on Chestnut Street Starring Robert Moloney: Enjoy this heart warming movie with metaphysical meaning, 7pm, Love Offering. 5840 Oak St., Vancouver, (604) 266-6281.

DEC 15
Wolfsong Chanting Circle - Winter Solstice Equinox Celebration, Saturday, 7pm. Participate singing shared sacred healing chants from the Spirit of the Land. Drums and didgeridoo's welcome. At Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles, 604.418.9636. Contact: Jerry DesVoignes info@healingvoices.net, www.healingvoices.net

DEC 19
Christmas Candlelighting Service 7:30pm: Join us for an inspiring evening of beautiful music, guided meditation, lighting of candles. Love Offering. 5840 Oak St., Vancouver, (604) 266-6281.

DEC 22
Luminance - A Winter Solstice Multimedia Celebration: Film, ecstatic dance ritual, performance, visionary art, music and dancing until 5am. Scotiabank Dance Centre. Tickets, information: www.luminance2007.com, 778-868-7534.

DEC 22
"Christmas in the Round" with the Mantra-Vani Orchestra: Sacred songs and chants from many traditions. St Marks Church, 1805 Larch @ W. 2nd, 8pm. $20/$15 seniors (Banyen Books) $25/door

DEC 23
Planetary Peace (Twin Hearts) Meditation Join us for this powerful meditation held on the full moon, 7:30pm, 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver

JAN 12-13
Sidney Health Fair: 100 practitioners, including wellness specialist Dr. Carolyn DeMarco on healthy living, osteoporosis. Naturopath Karen Paquette discusses "…Unleashing Sexier, Healthier You." 250-655-0515, www.siwc.org/healthfair

JAN 13
"Transformation of Man" Series: Tape 1 of 7 with J. Krishnamurti-philosopher, Dr. Bohm-physicist, Dr. Shainberg-psychiatrist. 4pm, open dialogue 5:30-7:30. MacMillan Planetarium lounge. Donation. Jeb 604.734.7774.

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SUNDAYS

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International Spiritualist Alliance: #201-317 Columbia Street, New West, 604-521-6336. Sunday services, 11am. Rev. Joyce Tarvin, 604-433-6663, www.isacanada.ca. See Resource Directory ad.

Mountaintop Unity Find a positive New Thought approach to life at Unity! Sundays 10:30am, John Braithwaite Community Centre, 145 West 1st, North Vancouver. 604-787-1477, www.unitymountaintop.ca

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Hawaiian Medicine Circle: 7 pm. Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks afterwards with like-minded people. $10 donation. At Hale Ola, a place of Healing, 1215 Madison Ave., Burnaby. 604-431-7474. Call Kumu Kaimana.

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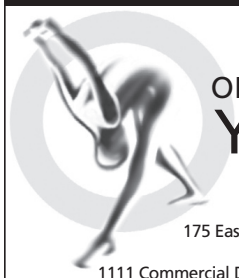
Program starts Jan. 5, Info Session Dec.1
Please call or email to register



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108 minutes of Yoga for YOGO24, 4:12-6 pm
December 22
Saturday Satsang with Nancy Watters
7:30-9:30 pm
January 5
Saturday Satsang with Wade Imre Morissette
7:30-9:30 pm

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www.merumountainyoga.com or
www.sivanandavancouver.com

INVITATION

Attention Natural Health Industry Professionals

The **Natural Health Business Council of Canada** is looking to meet with manufacturers, importers, retailers, practitioners and other natural health professionals to discuss the natural health industry and its future.

For information on meeting times, discussion topics and how you can get involved please email info@tallgrass.biz

ANNOUNCING

Next meeting January 30, 2008

Unitarian congregations of BC

Unitarians in downtown Victoria

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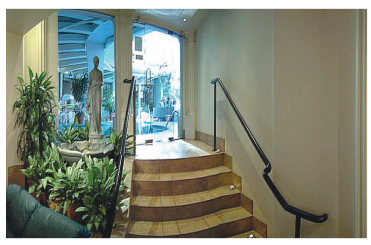
Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna www.unitariancongregation.org/kelowna/
Salt Spring Island Fellowship unitariancongregation.org/saltspring
First Unitarian Church of Victoria www.victoriaunitarian.ca
Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation www.unitariancongregation.org/victoria/
First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo www.ufon.ca
Comox Valley Unitarian Society www.unitariancongregation.org/comox/

RMT needed for busy Massage SPA.



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On Track Zodiac

NOVEMBER 2007 *Adrien Dilon*

ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
You might feel "all fired up" this month as you embark on a new idea or anticipate closure on your business dealings. Either way, resolve is near as you conclude a chapter in your life. Becoming more aware of your projections into the future, you no longer wish to limit your mind, or its freedom.

TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
Being singled out is full of suspense and intrigue. There could be some added melodrama in your relationships as your feelings ride the rails of emotional colour. Your laid-back nonchalance could face defining moments head-on.

GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
You may find that you are unconsciously responding to a preponderance of planets in fiery Sagittarius. This creates opposition within and you could become highly motivated; conversely, if you don't utilize these elements, you might energetically boil over. Take advantage of the ignition of fire and air and hit some high notes creatively.

CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
As Bob Dylan wrote, "You don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows." It's time to take stock of your personal life. Don't wait until the last minute to clear up any outstanding accounts with people. That which is unimportant will fall away into the gutter of misunderstanding.

LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
Saturn, one of the traditionally-named "bad" planets, is still in your sign, but it can also bring practicality while serving your need to be the best. To cultivate your greatness, it is all about stillness… another great characteristic of this planet which influences your activities. Be still and know.

VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
If the proverbial cat has got your tongue, you may need to really push through any barriers and challenges to speak your mind. The time is crucial for you to rise above any sub-par communication skills. Perhaps take some private coaching or singing to free up your divine voice.

LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
Work to stabilize the relationships you already have. Rich and meaningful gifts of true companionship are bound to come your way, especially if you avoid the temptation to dissociate from close relatives. People need you and you need them as well. Seek out what you need to learn.

SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Usually, the water signs wear a mask to reveal the depths of their moods. At this time, however, the powers that be may shine a light on those places within you that you would rather not display. Any falsehoods will break apart and reveal your genuine identity.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Count your blessings as they hatch. If you celebrate a birthday, two other planetary influences are guiding your hand and are instrumental in your creativity. For the better part of a month, you can align yourself with the muse of your choice and open up to divine providence.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
A new day is dawning for Capricorn as Jupiter moves into your sign after 10 years. Your cautious and shrewd personality will delight in some new expressions engineered by your unshaken faith. As you expand, so shall you augment your plans for direction and purpose.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
Bewitched isn't just a 1960's TV show. You may feel that your work and efforts go unnoticed and are carried off as if by unseen forces. Puzzling situations and mystifying events may cause you to think you are being duped and fooled by your coworkers. The veil will soon fall away.

PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
Before you fall into a brocade of tears, perhaps remember how you rose up from the ashes over the past year. Yours has been a tale of lady luck singing you a song of celebration, coupled with the voice of doom whispering in your ear. Fear not, dear fishes; your triumphs are duly noted without judgment.

Adrien Dilon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 32 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, adrien.dilon@gmail.com, www.Adrien-Dilon.com

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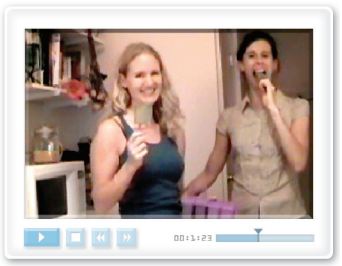
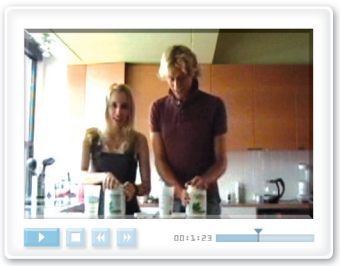
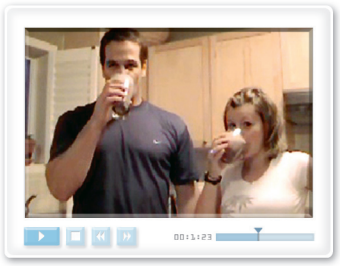


Allison and Michelle



Stephanie and Cory



Liam and Cherie

Carol and Anita

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